SERMON PLANS

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR

WITH A CHAPTER ON

HOW AND WHAT TO PREACH

FROM THE FRENCH OF

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WITHDRAWN

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INTRODUCTION

HOW AND WHAT TO PREACH

I have no intention whatever of writing a treatise on sacred eloquence. I have something altogether different in view. The preacher of the Gospel must address the people of his age as well as the theologian. Unless we propose to shut ourselves up in a solitude more apart from the busy world around us than was the ancient Thebaid, we cannot fail to recognize that in our days everything is being questioned; that on every side our contemporaries are demanding an answer to the problems of the age. The most obstinate conservative must face this curious and troubled humanity of the twentieth century, and in view of its new problems or of its old problems in a new dress preach to it in a language it can understand.

True, indeed, we cannot set aside one jot or tittle of the Catholic dogmas handed down to us from the beginning. As Catholics, as priests of God, we have no intention whatever of denying the very principle of our Catholic life, the tradition of the ancient faith. But the question is: How are we to teach this eternal truth to our contemporaries? What is the best, the most practical, the most fruitful way of adapting this immutable truth to the actual needs and requirements of the present generation?

It is of course true that in every age men have taken food and drink; but it is equally true that education, environment, and the different stages of civilization have a great influence on the kinds of food that different peoples favor, and on the manner in which they prepare it. A fisherman living for days and nights on his little vessel off the banks of Newfoundland will enjoy food that would sicken a Parisian club-man; a Frank of the time of Clovis might hardly appreciate the delicacies of the modern French chef.

It is the same with the banquet of the truth of God. I hardly think that we could be accused of truckling to the spirit of the age, if we say that a priest ought not to address an audience of carefully instructed Catholics in the same way that he would an audience of skeptics, unbelievers, indifferentists and agnostics. We have only to read those inimitable models of sacred eloquence in the Acts of the

Apostles and their epistles to be convinced that the preaching of the Gospel, that living teacher of the faith—*fides ex auditu*—varies according to the circumstances of place, of persons, and the like. Our own common sense tells us the same story.

What ought to be the special characteristics of our preaching to-day? *What* ought we preach? *How* ought we preach, how announce to men the truths of salvation? I am anxious to answer these questions of great practical import. I have preached the Gospel here in France for over thirty years. I know by personal experience the make-up of the average audience in the large cities as well as in the country towns; I have tried to profit by the good advice of bishops, experienced priests and eminent laymen. Perhaps some of my suggestions may be useful to my fellow-priests in their great apostolate of preaching the word of God.

I. What Ought We Preach?

What ought we preach? The truth of God; the Gospel. Well and good; but that is too general and too vague an answer to satisfy the intelligent inquirer. We must enter more into details; we must make many distinctions, as the scholastic disputant would say.

We can always, however, be certain of one thing. No matter what audience you address, no matter in what environment you find yourself, even if you are speaking before the French Academy or addressing both houses of Parliament, be assured that the majority of your hearers know nothing about religion, or worse still, they have only a mere smattering of religious truth—although of course their ignorance by no means prevents their discussing religious topics, and settling off-hand the greatest problems that have ever occupied the human mind.

Only those who have learned the fact by years of bitter experience can describe the mental attitude of too great a number of men toward the problems of religion. Everywhere you will come across ignorant men, full of false and inaccurate notions about religion, and many bitter prejudices. Although some pretend that most of these souls are men in bad faith, I, on the contrary, believe in the honesty and uprightness of the great majority who come to listen to us.

It is therefore through this thick undergrowth of false ideas, prejudices and ignorance that the word of God must make its way. How often, in an old city cathedral or in a poor country church,

when about to address an audience of such troubled and indifferent souls, many of whom are at least eager to hear the truth of God — how often have we said to ourselves in anguish of spirit: "What shall I say to them? What shall I say to them?"

You may have prepared a perfect discourse from the rhetorical standpoint, you may after careful thought and study have marshalled your proofs and arguments so as to convince as you thought the most prejudiced of your hearers, when all at once you perceive that you have forgotten the one thing necessary. You had prepared your sermon for an imaginary audience created in the silence of your study; you gave no thought to the real audience that is now before you, waiting for you to speak.

And this real audience, let me repeat it, either knows nothing of religion or is at least very ignorant of the truths of God. We must therefore speak to it simply, clearly, strongly and with great earnestness.

Let me tell those priests who are always on the lookout for a theme out of the ordinary a story from the life of Massillon. One day they brought to him a young girl, who had worried her teachers, good religious women, by her continued questioning and doubting; she was a precocious young infidel. The great bishop talked for some time with the child, and then when some one asked him: "What book ought she to read?" "Buy her," said Massillon, "a penny Catechism."

Yes, that is what every audience needs most of all—"the penny Catechism" — whether they are country folks or city bred, whether they are fashionable women, men of the world, or real savants. But here the trouble begins. We wish our hearers to listen patiently to this brief summary of religion, the Catechism, and to do so, we must treat them just as parents do their children when they wish them to take some bitter medicine. They sugar-coat the pills, or mix the nauseating dose with some sweet beverage, so that the child does not know what he is drinking.

It is perfectly evident that if you naïvely announce to a distinguished audience—or one which considers itself distinguished—that you are going to teach them the Catechism, you will be given a cold reception, or you will be regarded as rather a poorly educated man. With a little tact, however, you can teach them the Catechism, and call your simple teaching by some other high-sounding name.

I am well aware that there is another difficulty—not a small one

either. You are giving a retreat, preaching a mission, or delivering an Advent or a Lenten course of sermons. How can one give an adequate course of instruction in eight, ten, fifteen or even twenty sermons? Of course this can only be done in the regular preaching Sunday after Sunday in the parish church. It is a pastor's strict duty, although quite a number fail to realize their obligation, to instruct his people in some regular way. To speak frankly, I think that while here in France the instruction of the children is carried on with both zeal and intelligence, reform is still possible in the way of abandoning old routine methods.

I know that in this matter it is easy to criticise, and that many of the severe critics of our country pastors would utterly fail were they to attempt to teach the children according to some of their own pet theories. It is very hard to realize what difficulties the priest has to face while striving to instruct the little ones.

The so-called neutral school is hostile to the Church's teaching, and combats it at every turn; the family of the child is too often indifferent, and far from helping the pastor, the parents often oppose him in his ministry of catechizing. Still the teaching of the Catechism is a most important duty, in fact the duty of duties of a pastor. Nothing can take its place; and if religion is not deeply written in the hearts of the children from their earliest years, there is every reason to believe that they will in later life know nothing of God, the moral law, or the true life of the Christian—at most they may cling to some few external and mechanical religious practises. For that reason we cannot give too much praise or encouragement to those good priests who strive in every way to teach the little ones confided to their care the lessons of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But the chief defect is rather in the ordinary parish preaching. Let us enter into details.

In the first place, are all pastors fully alive to the grave obligation that rests upon them *by divine precept,* as the Council of Trent declares, of preaching the word of God? Do they conscientiously obey the diocesan regulations which apply in a definite and precise way the decree of the Council? Do they not sometimes forget the express teaching of their moral theology? I believe that all those who have received from you the noble mission of preaching the Gospel should examine their consciences frequently and thoroughly, to see how faithfully they have fulfilled this duty.

The same Council declares that pastors should above all preach those truths that are necessary to salvation. We can never repeat

too often to a forgetful, indifferent, and ignorant generation the mysteries of religion, the foundation truths of our faith, the necessity and form of prayer, etc.

As a rule, the bishops of France have pointed out in a general way the subject matter for the parochial sermon, but it is impossible for a bishop to regulate every detail. You remember that foolish saying of a certain vain Secretary of Public Instruction, who took out his watch and said: "At this hour all the colleges of the University of France are busy translating." A bishop will never be stupid enough to say: "At this hour every priest in my diocese is preaching on the same theme." In a matter of this kind much must be left to the individual initiative, and the wise and prudent judgment of the priest in daily contact with his parishioners; he best knows their tastes, their prejudices, and their needs. But are not some pastors apt to stray away altogether from the path of solid traditional preaching, to give free vent to their imagination, or to follow the inspirations of a zeal not according to prudence? How often have we heard parishioners complain that their pastor never preached, or preached but seldom, or talked in the pulpit about everything else but the truths of religion! Some priests instead of preaching the Gospel, or instructing their people carefully in Christian doctrine, utter a long string of incoherent words that are totally out of place in a Christian pulpit. They give vent to their personal feelings in a long series of bitter reproaches, vehement accusations, or invectives against certain individuals of their congregation. Too often, alas! the whole burden of their preaching is the persistent appeal to their hearers' pocketbooks. Surely we cannot dignify such talks by the name of sacred eloquence.

There is no need of our speaking of the bad effect of such an abuse of the pulpit, or of the discredit it reflects upon our pastoral office. Let us put a stop to these abuses. It is our duty to call attention to them.

I have always thought that the regular parish preaching was the most useful and most necessary kind of preaching, and likewise that it was the most difficult. After all, if a priest has a little knowledge, and some facility in speaking, it is comparatively easy for him to prepare a fairly good occasional sermon. But to preach in the same pulpit of the one parish church Sunday after Sunday, year in and year out, to interest and to teach the same hearers—that to me is the hardest work imaginable, and a ministry worthy of all praise.

Especially so, because the pastor has not the éclat of a special occasion to inspire his utterances, and because he can have no human reward for his obscure and humble ministry, and yet it is this ordinary ministry of parochial preaching which keeps alive the little flame of Christian faith. On the other hand, the common interests of pastor and people, the intimate knowledge he possesses of their lives, the loving spirit of a true priest who watches over them as a father over his children—all this enables him to preach with a simple and familiar authority that no visiting priest can ever have.

The pastor is apt to know well what points to insist upon in his sermons, and how to adapt the general truth of religion to the particular needs of his own congregation. It would indeed be a great mistake for him to set aside the old traditional sermon or homily of our fathers in the faith, and to give his people pompous sermons or learned conferences. How often a priest by discussing political, moral or scientific subjects far above the comprehension of his simple auditors runs the risk of not being understood, or so poorly that he had better not have spoken at all!

A priest that treats a serious question in the pulpit in a flippant manner, making a number of inaccurate and imprudent statements, will bring the sacred ministry of preaching into disrepute with the intelligent part of his audience. Does that imply that he ought not to bother himself about the burning questions of the day, or keep silent when his people are eager for the truth? By no means. But I would have the sacred orator prepare every sermon carefully. I would have him rise superior to all parties and personalities, and utterly avoid all metaphysical subtleties. Let him preach the eternal Gospel of God.

It is, of course, evident that every priest has the right—nay, the duty—to speak upon those questions which concern closely the moral life of man. At bottom, every political question, in the highest sense of the word, and every social question, is a moral question; and even in the teachings of science, how frequently are the interests of faith and religion involved! But one must have a great deal of tact and prudence in dealing with such questions. Let a pastor follow the advice of those in authority, and plan out a course of sermons as laid down by the Catechism of the Council of Trent, and he will have plenty of live topics to discuss, of faith, the Sacraments, the decalogue, and prayer. All that a Christian ought to know can be treated under these headings; the sacred orator has simply to suit his sub-

ject matter to the needs of his hearers. Let me illustrate my meaning by a few examples.

One of the most important questions of our day is the question of faith; its nature, its necessity, and its relations with reason. In the press and on the public platform the unbeliever is everywhere, both in the large city and in the tiniest village, denying the very fundamentals of religion. If a priest were to read attentively the few pages of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, the first word of the Apostles' Creed, *Credo*, he would find abundant material for a series of very opportune instructions on faith. Instead of plagiarizing more or less skilfully from the works of some old author, he could with a little personal labor give his people an original and effective sermon.

Under the heading of the fourth commandment one can treat of marriage, the duties of husbands and wives, of parents, of children, of employers and employed, of citizens and their rulers—in a word the whole field of domestic, civic, and social morality. A priest need not be a great scholar to discuss these themes briefly and solidly, making practical applications to suit his hearer's special needs.

Apropos of the seventh commandment, *Thou shalt not steal*, the Catechism sets forth the legitimate basis of private ownership, and the duties it entails. Who are guilty in the sight of God of breaking this command? The employer who does not pay his workman a just salary, and the laborer who scamps his work; the usurer who oppresses and grinds down the poor; *hinc etiam referuntur foeneratores in rapinis acerrimi et acerbissimi qui miseriam plebem compilant ac trucidant usuris;* the venal judge on the bench; the trust magnate who unjustly raises the prices of necessaries, etc. Here, too, the Catechism insists on the necessity of almsgiving, the obligation of labor, the duty of sobriety, etc. How many subjects are handled in a few lines! What a choice of materials lies open to the sacred orator! If a priest at the same time read the many encyclicals of the Popes for the last fifty years on these same subjects, he will certainly be well able to instruct his people in their religious duties, and safeguard them against the current errors of the day. Of course, I am fully aware that a great deal depends on the manner in which the pastor presents these truths. Of this we will speak in the second part of our paper.

Besides the ordinary pastoral preaching, there are the extraordinary sermons preached on special occasions, such as missions, re-

treats, novenas, etc. I am far from denying that such sermons are to a certain extent needed in every parish. No priest—and certainly not the old preacher who is writing these lines—would dispute the usefulness, and I may add the relative necessity, especially in certain periods of the Church's history, of the preaching orders, and the apostolic missionaries.

Every one is ready to acknowledge their great zeal for the propagation of the faith in pagan lands and their great work in combating false teachers at home like the Albigenses of the Middle Ages, or the modern Protestants. We all know the great service they are rendering the Church to-day by their recall of countless sinners to God and their conversions of many non-Catholics.

The religious orders and the bands of diocesan missionaries have done great work for God and souls, especially in rousing the indifferent ones to a sense of their duty. This is certainly a most important and most useful ministry, and if it died out to-morrow untold harm would be done to countless souls.

Still we must remember that the work of the missionary can never take the place of the pastor of the parish; and that many missionaries are apt to insist on the non-essentials of religion, and to preach sermons in which their imagination plays a greater part than their reason. The words of a good missionary will be productive of much good, but only on condition that the parish in which he preaches is well cared for, both before and after his coming. If not, what is the result? The ground has been lying fallow for years, so that the work of the laborers for a week or even a month is almost useless. They can, of course, plant some good seed, which may bring forth fruit with God's blessing thirty, sixty or one hundred fold. But most of it goes to waste, because the patient and continued labor of a good pastor is entirely lacking. It is the missionary's duty to call to mind, to accentuate, to insist upon the ordinary preaching of the pastor; it is the pastor's duty to prepare for the coming of the missionary, and to perpetuate the good work done by his own zeal and love for souls.

On the other hand, if missions and retreats are given too often —say once every year—the people are being fairly saturated with these occasional sermons. The effect of this is often to make the people consider the sermons of their pastor rather dry and tiresome, and to make him put a part of his responsibility upon the shoulders of his many devoted colaborers.

The old-fashioned missionary with "the pose of a Hercules and the voice of a Stentor," and the affected preacher who worked upon the sympathies and feelings of his women hearers, are fast dying out to make way for a simple and natural preaching of the word of God; —and in this case the natural is the supernatural of the Gospel—simple truth and life.

But the great problem is how to accommodate this Gospel, not to the literary tastes, but to the weaknesses, needs and temperaments of your various hearers; and even with the best will in the world, one is often at a loss. The Lenten preacher, or the missionary who comes and goes, cannot in a few sermons give a complete course in moral or dogma. He is bound to make a choice of subjects, and it is precisely this choice which causes worry to many an ardent apostle of the word of God.

In the first place we must take for granted a pretty general state of religious ignorance, and for that reason it is good to explain often the chief dogmas of the faith. We should give our preference to those doctrines which are least understood by the people. "For four years," says Father Le Jeune, "wherever I preached an Advent or a Lenten course I repeated after my sermon the principal mysteries of faith, viz.: the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour, besides the essential truths regarding Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist." And he adds with charming naïveté: "They always took it in good part, even in large cities like Paris." I do not know whether a congregation in a small city even would enjoy to-day hearing this summary of the Catechism after each discourse. But even if we do not follow absolutely the example of the celebrated blind missionary, we can, at least, learn from him the great importance of frequently discussing the principal dogmas of our faith.

We are too often apt to forget that we are not preaching our own views, but that we are fulfilling a divine commission; again that the grace of God ever works in the souls of our hearers.

Be fully convinced of the fact that the men of our day—more perhaps than at any other period of the world's history—are worried and troubled souls, thirsting for the truth. As one of the most illustrious preachers of the last century, Mgr. Gay, put it: "More than ever are the men of our day won by the beauty and conquered by the goodness which is God, Christ Jesus." And again, speaking of his chief mystical work: "Suppose that the worldly, the unreflecting

and the unbelievers deign to read this book, do you think it will be time wasted? I do not think so myself. There are many hearts seduced by vice, because they do not know the beauty of virtue, there are many men who remain in the darkness of error simply because the rays of truth have never flashed upon their minds. The answer to their objections and the solution of their difficulties are often found in the simple teachings of Christianity, that wonderful harmony of the divine and the human! A great illumining comes from the sanctuary, not merely enlightening those inside the temple of God, but spreading its brightness everywhere outside it! Our faith in the power of Catholic truth is boundless; and what Catholic must be taught that it is God's will that all should know this truth? The great wonder is that after so many centuries of the Church's universal teaching, Christianity should be so little known in the world."

Yes, be well convinced that a simple, calm and convincing exposition of the doctrines and works of our Saviour, of *all* His Gospel, will win and not repel these many souls who are wearied to death with the problems that beset them. As Mgr. d'Hulst well said: "How many times have we heard scientists who had lost their faith without having found rest for their souls in their studies express their disappointment at a sermon. They had gone to a Catholic Church in anguish of spirit to find peace for their troubled minds, and lo! they found themselves bored by an orator, who instead of preaching the Gospel their souls craved, was making a vain parade of his superficial knowledge of profane science. 'We know these things better than you,' said these men; 'we know them, but they do not satisfy our longing. Tell us what we do not know, preach to us the revelation that you say is from God.'"

If the Christian teaching is from God, if it is Catholic, it must be adapted to every age. The important thing is to preach it in all its purity and integrity; to adapt it to the varying needs of different audiences is comparatively easy, if the sacred orator is a man of tact and common sense.

To speak of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and the supernatural life, and the grandeur of the supernatural order—its basis, its purpose, its privileges, and its obligations; to explain the marvelous economy of our religion, and to show how it divinely satisfies all the needs and aspirations of the human soul; to draw from the Gospel the living waters of eternal life; to explain the precepts of the moral law and their relation with doctrine; to make our every word center

in the word made flesh, Christ Jesus, who lives in the Gospel history, who speaks to the world to-day through his Church, who gives Himself to men through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and who perpetually exercises the office of Redeemer, Saviour, and Sanctifier of poor humanity—this is the true ministry of the sacred orator, whether he is the greatest apostle or the humblest missionary.

A few years ago, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, by the special command of Leo XIII, addressed a letter to all the Italian bishops insisting on their carrying out the traditional laws of the Church with regard to preaching the word of God. This instruction quotes the following words of Pius IX: "Let the sacred orator teach, not his own doctrine, but that of Jesus crucified, announcing clearly and openly the holy dogmas and precepts of our religion, according to the teaching of the Church, and the Fathers; let his language be dignified and serious; let him carefully explain the Christian's various duties, denouncing sin, and inciting to piety: so that, strengthened by the word of God, his hearers may shun all vice, practise every virtue, and thereby attain eternal happiness." These are soul words to remember, no matter where we exercise our apostolate of teaching, no matter what form our instruction takes. After having declared what one ought to preach, and having rebuked those who "seek their own interest and not the glory of Jesus Christ," the instruction treats of the manner of preaching.

II. How Ought We Preach?

As I said before, I have no desire to write a treatise on sacred eloquence, so that I leave to the *ex professo* teachers of oratory the work of laying down the laws of rhetoric. My object is to call the reader's attention rather to the psychological side of the subject.

I have already insisted on the great importance of the regular Sunday sermons in the parish church. If we are really desirous of having all our people profit by this best method of instruction, we must first give these sermons at an hour that will suit the majority of our people, and, second, we must not bore them by long sermons.

It is a well-known fact that even fairly good Christians who practise their religious duties regularly, are often very anxious to escape hearing sermons. They generally go to a low Mass every Sunday, and thus pass their whole lives without ever having listened to their pastor's preaching. Of course in many dioceses the bishops have

met this abuse by ordering their priests to preach a short fifteen-minute sermon at every Mass. This is comparatively easy in large city parishes, in which a number of priests may preach in turn. But in a country parish a priest is often obliged to say two Masses in two different places miles apart, or two Masses in his own church. Now some priests are physically unable to preach twice under such conditions, especially if we take into account the other Sunday work of teaching Catechism, hearing confessions and the like. The best way for them, in my opinion, to fulfil their obligation is to have an evening service of hymns, prayers, rosary, sermon and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament—the whole lasting not more than forty minutes. If a pastor is at all zealous, and by careful preparation makes these talks attractive and interesting, he will in a short time bring the most careless ones to hear the word of God.

Another important rule for the priest who has to preach to his people every Sunday is: *Be brief*. I have always been struck by the brevity of the homilies of St. John Chrysostom, and the sermons of St. Augustine; they certainly were never longer than twenty or thirty minutes. I know that the sermons of the seventeenth century preachers like Bossuet and Bourdaloue especially were very long. But we must remember that they preached before very select audiences. Besides, the men of those days were far differently constituted from the men of the twentieth century. We are nervous, impressionable mortals, always in a hurry, and hardly deigning to give a few moments to each of the many problems that crowd upon us for solution. Our forefathers were more calm, less apt to be carried away by the whirlwind of events, less saturated with the literature of the day; they were not cursed by the modern epidemic of pamphlets, journals, and conferences on every possible theme: their minds, if not as active and as spontaneous as ours were surely more thoughtful and, despite their many sins and debaucheries, they were more alive to the serious problems of religious truth and living.

The people of our day will not go wild as in times past over these long sermons of Bourdaloue, which are practically whole treatises of theology. They will tolerate long sermons on special occasions, as, for instance, the celebrated conferences of Notre Dame; but as a general rule, they demand a short sermon, that will give good solid instruction in a very short time. Alas! how many pulpit orators spend a very long time in saying practically nothing, so that the

value of their discourse is in inverse ratio to its length. How can a priest hope as a general thing to interest a man who has assisted at high Mass for an hour, if he preach to the poor unfortunates for another hour? An experience of over thirty years has proved to me that the people of our day demand short sermons.

Do not for a moment imagine that a short sermon does not require long and careful preparation. On the contrary, if a priest desires to give his people solid instruction on some dogma of the faith, he must, if he confine himself to twenty or thirty minutes, be perfect master of his subject. If he is anxious to say a great deal in a short time, and not to give the people the impression that he is a vain and empty-headed elocutionist, he must labor long and hard, so as to perfectly assimilate the truth he is to preach. Short sermons are the declared enemy of idleness, routine, and the stupid folly of improvising in the pulpit.

If a pastor wish to hold his people, he must be simple as well as brief in his sermon. From this point of view the people of to-day are much better than their fathers. They tell a good story of the celebrated preacher Massillon. He was preaching a Lenten course in a little city of the south of France, and in his sermons avoided carefully the affected ways of the pulpit orators of the day, especially their Latin and Greek quotations, and their indiscriminate citing of philosophies, savants, and profane authors. The church wardens, who marveled at this new manner of preaching, came in a body to him to remonstrate respectfully but firmly, because they thought they were being deprived of their due amount of Latin quotations. The story adds—we will not vouch for its truth—that the young orator ironically replied that he would fully meet all their requirements in his Easter sermon, and astonish them with his great erudition.

One cannot be simple without being clear. How stupid for a sacred orator to speak always in the language of the schools, and hide the word of God under a cloud of technical formulas and abstract ideas which his people cannot understand. The stupid ones will say: What a learned man our pastor is! but the intelligent ones will be disgusted, and the good souls indignant at this travesty of preaching.

One ought to speak so that all can understand. The most sublime truths of Christianity should be discussed in so simple a way that the most ignorant souls in the parish can follow what is being said. The gospels are on this point our great model.

The Instruction of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars referred to above rebukes "those preachers of the Gospel who instead of speaking with the clearness and simplicity of the Gospels, discuss a number of obscure and abstract subjects far above the average intelligence of their people, so that the complaint is justly made: 'the children demanded bread, and there was no one to give it them.'" The result is that their preaching has a certain theatrical stamp, and is devoid of seriousness and supernatural efficacy. The people, and often the priests, too, lose all taste for the word of God, the good souls are scandalized, and the wicked receive little or no profit. Many of course will rush in crowds to hear the orator who uses the high-sounding words of *progress, country, modern science* and the like, but after having vigorously applauded the orator "who knows how to talk," they will leave the church just as they entered it. "They admire the speaker, but they are not converted by his words." (St. Augustine, on St. Matt. xix, 25.)

The great fault of the modern pulpit orator is that he is not natural. It is almost impossible to define what naturalness is, although we all recognize it at once in a speaker. We often hear it said: "The lawyer is natural when he pleads his case, the politician is natural when he speaks on the public platform for his constituents, why then does the priest cease being natural when he mounts the pulpit?"

Of course we must admit that it is easier to be natural while discussing a practical question, or an ordinary matter of every-day life, than while speaking to the people on the sublime doctrines of religion. Besides, granted that there are bombastic, pompous, solemn preachers of the Gospel, we all know that many lawyers and deputies have a ridiculous delivery. However, it is only too true, whether due to a false tradition or the character of the place from which they speak, that many sacred orators are far from being natural in the pulpit. It is very easy to tell young priests in the beginning of their ministry to adopt the ordinary tone of conversation. But nothing is more difficult to acquire. More stress should be laid upon this important factor in effective preaching in our seminaries, where often the true speaking voice is practically unknown. Père Monsabre thus describes it as "the natural tone of an animated, easy, far-reaching conversation, in which you strive, despite the large space you have to fill, to observe all the rules of phrasing, modulation and accent. Do not confound it, I beg of you, with that plaintive sing-song which

rises and falls within the compass of two or three notes, the voice being raised slightly in the middle of every sentence, and allowed to fall with a sort of whine at the end. This deplorable delivery has been too long regarded as the special characteristic of the pulpit orator."

If a priest speak simply, clearly and naturally, if he speak with profound conviction of the truth he utters, his words will never fail of their effect. He must enter into the very soul of his hearers, and make them full of his spirit. "And yet, how many priests preach as if they were speaking to a sort of vague and vapory personage, floating somewhere near the roof of the church: His hearers are below him; but he seems afraid of coming too near them."

Nothing can take the place of the direct relation between the speaker and the people he hopes to instruct and move. By speaking in the air, or by reciting just as a school-boy does his lesson, we will never succeed in our ministry of preaching. We must become one with our hearers; we must attract them, and make them hang on our every word; we must take these cold and indifferent souls and make them burn with the fire within us, so that they think our thoughts and live for the moment our very life. This is really the great triumph of the sacred orator, that he becomes united with his audience and carries them with him by the very torrent of his words. Without this, a priest may be a beautiful talker, an elegant, bright and pleasant speaker; but he will never be an apostle, or a conqueror of souls.

But above all a priest should never forget that to win souls he must have a loving soul himself, and prove by his life that he loves his people. Some one has declared that the great secret of eloquence "was to put a thought into words, and to put into the words a soul that feels deeply." Let others spend their time in writing literary talks to charm an audience of idlers or curious dilettantes, while we remember the beautiful words of Lacordaire: "Eloquence is the word of man which makes a soul on fire." Whoever has a holy passion for truth and a great zeal for souls, will always be eloquent despite all the faults he may naturally possess.

In conclusion, I would say that I have wished simply to give to others the benefit of my long experience in the ministry of preaching. There is a legitimate progress in all things human, for progress is nothing else but the continuity of life; so let there be progress in

the preaching of the word of God in the sense of abandoning the faults of other generations or our own. *Non nova sed nove.* Let the words of the eternal Gospel come from our lips with a young and vigorous utterance, that will carry conviction to the heart of the age in which we live.

SERMON PLANS

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Happiness

Theme.—The happiness of man is found

(1) not in things,

(2) but in the spirit.

Introduction.—The custom on this day to wish all people happiness. God has given man many things; man has great power over other creatures; he generally is the author of his happiness or unhappiness. In what does happiness consist?

I. (a) Not in wealth and prosperity. Temporal things of short duration. If we seek happiness in them, our happiness shall cease with their possession. The greed of the covetous never satisfied. There is little necessary for our existence.

(b) Not in living extravagantly and in great style. The intemperate in food and drink injure their health, they who do no work are seldom contented.

(c) Not in another road of life. The vocation of a man usually suited for him and he can find happiness in it. Dissatisfied persons would not do better in other vocations. Vocations usually man's own choice. Providence put you in your station. The laborer may be happier than the lord!

(d) Not in the favor and esteem of neighbors, they are changeable as the weather. Those whom you love may not value your

love. Those with whom you live in happy union only mortal and imperfect beings. Place little reliance in man.

II. (a) In your industry, activity and skill. If you possess these you are not much dependent on others. You will preserve your health. These are the most valuable possessions. They will keep you out of temptation. Sweet leisure hours, contented mind.

(b) In your liberty. Liberty from luxury that you may not become a slave to it. Liberty from worry, it will not avail you. Liberty from passions, they only torment. Liberty from human respect: do right and fear no one.

(c) In your virtue and rectitude. The good child happier than the bad one. The virtuous youth happier than the dissolute one. Happier the good woman than the frivolous one, the honest man than the thief, the saving man than the gambler.

(d) In union with God. Happiness derived from the true faith, not from disbelief and doubt. Happiness in the firm confidence in God. The hope of God's grace, of mercy, of salvation, of reunion with all our loved ones in the eternal beatitude.

Conclusion.—I most sincerely wish all of you happiness. Seek it and you shall find it. It lies not beyond our reach, it is in every man's power to create it for himself, and the means may be summed up in contentedness, work, virtue and confidence in God.

THE SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR'S

Divine Providence

"Being warned in sleep he retired into the quarters of Galilee."—Matt. ii, 22.

Theme.—There is a Divine Providence which

(1) preserves mankind,

(2) rules mankind.

Introduction.—Divine Providence watched over the infant Jesus. He was taken into Egypt, then back to Juda, from there to Nazareth: always to a safe place. We see here the preserving and guiding hand of Divine Providence. Divine Providence watches over all creatures, but especially over mankind.

I. God preserves man's life as long as it is needful for each individual. Death overtakes man only then when his mission is fulfilled here below. And mankind will disappear from this earth when the purpose for which it was created shall have been accomplished.

(a) God grants to all what is necessary for the preservation of this life, and to many He grants more. The number of mankind is ever increasing and God permits man to discover new means of sustenance. Divine Providence guides the hand of man to new discoveries and inventions in all branches of science to keep pace with the multiplied necessities of the increasing population. "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord, and thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand and fillest with blessing every living creature" (Ps. cxliv, 15, 16).

(b) Through God's permission sometimes trials such as wars and epidemics come over mankind. Such punishments are induced by man's sinfulness, and through them he becomes God fearing. Moreover, God has ordained that man shall earn all achievements by his own efforts, and such calamities are incentives to efforts for the betterment of spiritual and material conditions.

(c) Misfortunes often befall the individual. Storms or fire destroy possessions. Sickness may cause great misery. These no doubt are severe trials, but the hand of Divine Providence is soon apparent, and what is at first considered a great misfortune often turns out as a blessing in disguise.

II. God governs man and guides him according to His divine will, even though He has given him free will. God retains the mastership. In spite of our free will nothing can happen without God's permission. He makes the paths for us, and permits us to be either rich or poor, great or low, healthy or frail. We may distinguish three classes of men.

(a) The good are undoubtedly governed by God through His Commandments, through their conscience, through the Church, through parents and superiors. The good love God and desire nothing better than to be governed by Him. Their body and its cravings are subject to reason and conscience, and conscience is guided by God. This is the right thing, and it leads to happiness and peace.

(b) Another class are the people who are led to travel the evil path, but soon turn back and repent. God accomplishes this through

His calling grace, through the warnings He sends through misfortune or serious injury from their sins. While these people refuse to be governed by God for a time, they soon repent that they have withdrawn themselves from the leading hand of God and return to His beneficent rule.

(c) The third class are the hardened sinners, and in their case we frequently see their evil actions turned to good account by the providence of God. Examples: The sons of Jacob, the accusers and judges of Jesus, the wrath of Saul. Thus we see that even they can not defeat the will of God, and will they or not, they are but tools in His hands, although their stubborn mind may refuse to let God save their souls.

Conclusion.—There is a Divine Providence! Let us subject ourselves to the governing hand of God. God's will shall prevail. By resisting it we shall cast ourselves into eternal destruction.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Proper Training of Children

"Son, why hast thou done so to us?"—Luke ii, 48.

Theme.—Parents should help children to realize their vocation from their earliest youth. What is their vocation

(1) in the family,
(2) as citizens,
(3) in the church,
(4) for heaven.

Introduction.—To the question of our text Jesus answered: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" It was His future task to appear to the world as Teacher and Redeemer. Therefore He wished to be among the teachers, as it were, to fit Himself for the work. His parents not permitted to interfere with this duty. Our children also have a vocation!

I. As member of the family. To become good and useful members of the family they must be guided by the good example of parents, in industry, frugality, peacefulness, and love of home. Why all these are necessary.

II. The boy will in time become a citizen. What qualities must he possess to become a good citizen? (a) Honesty. The righteous conscience—the so-called elastic conscience. (b) Truthfulness. Man injures himself by double dealing and hypocrisy. (c) Public spirited. Helpful to others. Do to others as you would wish them to do to you.

III. The child becomes a member of the Church. Endow him with (a) fear of God, (b) piety, (c) reverence for sacred things. If the child at home is attentive at prayers, and learns to be a practical Christian, there is good hope that in later years these good habits will prevail.

IV. The child is intended for heaven, it is a gift from heaven, it must be returned to heaven. Children should be brought up with this thought ruling all their training. Catholic school. Supervision. Help in the choice of vocation.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Feast of the Holy Name

"His name was called Jesus."—Luke ii, 21.

Theme.—The Holy Name of Jesus signifies to us

(1) the redemption of mankind accomplished by Our Saviour;

(2) a means for our individual sanctification.

Introduction.—This day the feast of the Holy Name. The feast of the Holy Name celebrated by the Church since 1712. Let us contemplate this Holy Name so that we may be properly inspired with devotion to it. What does the Holy Name of Jesus signify?

I. Customary in ancient times to express in the names of great men their principal achievements, testifying that these men accomplished their great success in those countries. as for instance the name *Scipio Africanus.* In the same manner does the name of Jesus express the work which Our Saviour accomplished. This work was our redeemer and the name Jesus translated means Redeemer.

(a) The angel: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i, 21). This redemption chiefly accomplished through the bitter passion and death of Our Lord. He atoned for the sins of mankind. He appeased the threatening hands of an outraged God. "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, fastening it to the cross" (Col. ii, 14).

(b) This work He could do only as the Son of God, as Godman, as God. The sin of man, the offense toward Almighty God was infinite, therefore infinite atonement was necessary. Only one equal to God could again reconcile us to God. Because it was the suffering of His beloved Son, God accepted the atonement and was again reconciled with man. Why an angel or man could not have atoned for our sins. Great and sublime, therefore, the dignity that lies in the name of the Redeemer, in the Holy Name of Jesus.

(c) We should honor this Holy Name. Only with devotion and love should this sweet name be pronounced. The name of father, mother, etc., sacred to us: how much more sacred, then, the name of our Redeemer. "Let all the angels of God adore him" (Hebr. i, 6). "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. ii, 10).

(d) "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Alas, the name of Jesus is often desecrated. It is often pronounced thoughtlessly, it is by many abused in curses and blasphemy. Men would not think of abusing the name of their best friend in their outbursts of passion; why should this Holy Name be selected for such ignominious use?

II. Jesus our Saviour did not only atone for the sins of mankind; as the Redeemer, His Holy Name is an efficient means for our individual sanctification.

(a) In His name we receive help. "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no name under heaven given to man whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv, 12). "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise and walk" (Acts iii, 6).

(b) God hears our prayers because of the Holy Name. "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do" (John xiv, 13). Therefore the Church adds at the conclusion of prayers: "Through Christ Our Lord."

(c) By this Holy Name we can make our acts meritorious. "Whatsoever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"

(Col. iii, 17). If at arising, retiring, and beginning of work we say, "In the name of Jesus," "in God's name," our work will become meritorious and pleasing to God.

(d) With this name we conquer in temptations and danger. With this Holy Name you may conquer sin. A person who dies with this Holy Name on his lips may safely be hoped to attain salvation.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Feast of the Holy Family

"Who arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel."—Matt. ii, 21.

Theme.—Happiness in the family is secured by following the example of the Holy Family at Nazareth, namely, by

(1) the members working harmoniously and for each other;
(2) Mutually sympathizing in suffering and sharing good fortune.
(3) giving one another a good example in virtue and in working their salvation.

Introduction.—At Nazareth the Holy Family lived in utter seclusion. They worked with one another and for each other; they shared good and evil days; they encouraged and edified one another. If our Christian families would act in like manner they would also find happiness.

I. (a) The family is a copartnership for work. The husband has his task laid out for him and so has the wife. (b) The children are required to render what service they can, and as they grow up they are called upon to make themselves more useful. (c) Home and family for many people their chief sphere of activity. (d) A man that would not properly provide for his family neglects his duty, so the wife who is careless. (e) Children commit sin if they refuse to do their share of the work, if they refuse to aid their parents that have become aged and infirm.

II. A family has many trials. (a) If the husband is worried about business affairs, the wife comforts him; the wife has her troubles and looks to the husband for encouragement. The chil-

dren also take their little or big afflictions to their parents. (b) There is also mutual enjoyment; in the work, in the blessing of God, and in the possession of a comfortable home. (c) People should seek their pleasure in the midst of their family. The father must know that for his own and for the sake of his family it is necessary that he spend his leisure hours at home. The wife's place naturally is at her own fireside, and it is her task to make home attractive for the husband. No need to say that home is the safest place for children. (d) How sad if the man or the wife, or both, seek their pleasure outside of the home. (e) How dangerous for sons and daughters to look for their enjoyments away from the home.

III. (a) The main purpose of matrimony is that the married people help each other to work their salvation. Their love for each other demands this, and in the Sacrament of Marriage they receive special gifts and helps for this task. (b) What parents must do for their children. (c) How the children will by their innocence exert beneficial influence upon their parents. I have so far pictured the good Christian families. What an awful contrast if we contemplate the misery of the unhappy home, where discord and strife hold sway. Divorce.

Conclusion.—There are many wheels in a watch, one locks into the other and thus all work together to the one end. In like manner the members of a family should work together. What a blessing for mankind if the family life were more properly cultivated. People would be more contented, much misery would be prevented, health would be better taken care of, and more people would attain salvation.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Seeking Help from God

"Lord, save us, we perish."—Matt. viii, 25.

Theme.—In distress and danger we may call upon the Lord, but in a proper manner.

(1) We may exclaim: "Lord, save us."

(2) We may not exclaim: "We perish."

Introduction.—The disciples lost their wits; their faith wavered;

they lost all confidence. They exclaimed: "Lord, save us, we perish." The first part of the explanation was proper and salutary. Let this be our theme. How may we pray to God in extreme need and how not?

I. God can and will help us in danger and distress; His providence will take care of us even if we do not ask Him; yet it will benefit us to ask for His help.

(a) God is omniscient and all wise, therefore it is not necessary to acquaint God with our need, or with the means wherewith He may help us. But we should in our prayer thoroughly realize the nature of our need and make this need or danger clear to our own eyes and God will more readily assist us. Praying thus to God, we may perhaps realize that the supposed danger or need is an imaginary or exaggerated one. Let us pray in the spirit of a certain wise man who prayed in these words: "Give us what is necessary, even though we do not ask it, and refuse what is harmful, even though we ask it," and we shall bear our trials much more easily even though we may be denied the desired relief.

(b) God is almighty, He can help us. If in our need we acknowledge our inability to help ourselves, we pray with humility, and an humble prayer is heard by God.

(c) God is love and He wants to help us. Yet suffering is often necessary for our salvation. If in our sufferings we sincerely confess our trespasses and firmly resolve to reform our ways, God may consider our sufferings to have accomplished their purpose and He may relieve us from them.

(d) God is infinitely just. If in adversity we meditate upon this justice and acknowledge that we have deserved the punishment, we shall bear it more courageously and profit by it for our salvation. And as the just God can not forsake His own, He will hear the prayer of them that are His own.

II. We must not exclaim: "We perish."

(a) Not in poverty. God will help. He will guide; He will move human hearts to commiseration. Many know and observe the commandment of Christian charity—and heed the words of St. Paul: "Do not forget to do good, and to impart; for by such sacrifice God's favor is obtained" (Heb. xiii, 16). "See the birds of the air." The poor have always had Our Lord's special attention. Their care He warmly recommends to all of us and holds out magnificent rewards to the charitable.

(b) In humiliation and criticism. Do not lose courage if evil is unjustly spoken about you, if your good intentions are not appreciated. The good we do under adverse circumstances is more meritorious. Repay ingratitude with greater love.

(c) In danger. How often and to how many dangers have we not been exposed? God has helped us in the past; He will in future help us. "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee" (Isaias xliii, 1, 2).

(d) In sickness and death. The suffering of sickness will not last forever. God burdens us not with more than we can bear. At the right time God will help. Death the beginning of a happier life.

Conclusion.—Therefore call to God: God, save us, but not: Lord, I perish. No one will perish if he be with God. Those that perish are the ones who refuse God's aid.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Of Being Accessory to Another's Sin

"Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it cockle?"—Matt. xiii, 27.

Theme.—He that induces others to sin

(1) commits an outrage against God,
(2) injures his neighbor,
(3) hurts himself.

Introduction.—The evil spirit the one, chiefly, who sows cockle in the heart of man; has done so from the beginning and is still doing it to-day. He has, alas, many helpers among men. These auxiliaries seduce and give scandal. What is their offense against God, against their neighbor, against themselves?

I. Through inducing their neighbor to sin, an outrage, a robbery, is committed against God.

(a) Against God the Father. Man is God's creature, His pos-

session, image, child. If one induces man to sin he robs God of His possession, of His child, etc. What a crime to steal another man's property? What greater crime to steal God's!

(b) Against Jesus Christ. He suffered and died for all men. We are His redeemed, His purchased. How daring to take from Him that which He purchased so dearly! "Now, when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" (I Cor. viii, 12). St. Bernard: "As our Saviour gave His precious Blood to redeem our souls, does He not suffer greater ignominy from him who robs Him of one of His souls, than from the executioners themselves?"

(c) Against the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost sanctifies, purifies, strengthens man in Baptism, Confirmation, etc. He who leads man to sin destroys the work of the Holy Ghost.

II. Injury against the neighbor.

(a) His happiness is disturbed. How unfortunate they who do not believe, who do not hope! They who do not love work, but love drink and gambling! They who laugh at the admonitions of parents and superiors, and forfeit honor and respect! They who reap the stings of conscience and the reproaches of their fellowmen!

(b) Possibly their salvation is sacrificed. The seducer may perhaps save his soul through timely repentance; but can that be said also of the souls misled by him? St. Augustine: "Do not believe that you are not a murderer if you lead others to sin!"

(c) Perhaps they that have been misled are again the cause of others going astray. The sinner seeks companions: evil is contagious. St. Cyprian: "He that gives scandal draws many with him into eternal destruction."

III. The seducer hurts himself.

(a) His own burden becomes greater. Surely his own sins enough of a burden. Now he adds the sins of others to it. Origen: "He that tempts others to sin commits a greater crime than if he himself sins." St. Bonaventure: "He that gives scandal will not only have to give an account of his own sins before God, but also of those whom he scandalized."

(b) His conversion becomes difficult. In doing penance restitution must be made for everything maliciously injured. How can this be done in the case of the seducer?

(c) He incurs severe judgment and punishment. The just God

will deal severely. He will demand an accounting for the souls that were lost through the influence and advice of the seducer and scandal giver. And if condemned to hell he is likely to meet there some of his victims, who will curse him as the author of their evil fate.

SEPTUAGESIMA

Discontent

"And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house."—Matt. xx, 11.

Theme.—The discontent of man:

(1) What is its origin?

(2) Why is discontent harmful?

(3) How can it be overcome?

Introduction.—The laborers that first entered the vineyard complained and were discontented—even though they received what was due them. So are many people dissatisfied and discontented with what is theirs, their lot, their vocation and station in life. A contented man a rarity.

I. Discontent has its origin.

(a) In a perverted mind that looks upon the reverse side of matters and lacks appreciation of benefit. That which we do not possess usually longed for, rather than that which we possess; things which we have lost more thought of than those that remain. Even the millionaire may be moved to envy when he sees plain country people heartily make merry, and he may long to be one of them, so free from care. Yet he commands a luxury unknown to them. Discontent not to be confounded with ambition. But ambition unrestrained by a righteous will leads to discontent.

(b) From a morbid mind. Sadness, melancholy. Men affected by such states of mind do not consider that what they possess of much account, they complain where there is no reason. Could we see the interior of such minds we would find them thoroughly disordered.

(c) From an insatiable mind and feeble will. Alexander thought he had almost all that man could desire, and yet he was malcontented. A strong will would appreciate achievements and dominate the malcontented mind.

II. Discontent is harmful because—

(a) It is folly. Discontent will not alter circumstances. We grieve in vain. Life happier if spent in contentment. Peace and contentment within reach of everybody. No station in life so low as to bar the opportunity to do good. Faithful fulfilment of one's duties productive of sweet contentment. Due appreciation of the gifts of God.

(b) It creates unhappiness. Real suffering and real need are made greater and harder to bear by discontent. Contentment and resignation would alleviate the burden.

(c) It may cause the loss of salvation. A discontented person has no place in heaven, for he does not properly believe, love, pray nor trust. The discontented are grumblers against divine Providence, they refuse to acknowledge that God wisely and lovingly governs the world and the individual. Discontent and love of God can not dwell together.

III. What cures discontent? Religion. It directs our attention:

(a) To the teaching of Jesus. He taught us to know our Father; how He always keeps us in His care, even in our suffering; why suffering is necessary for us; how it tends to our eternal salvation; that this earth is not our real home, etc.

(b) To the life of Jesus. His earthly life one of poverty, persecution and suffering.

(c) To Jesus' passion and death. Should we not be made contented, when we compare our little sufferings with the appalling torments which the Son of God, Our Lord and Saviour, underwent for our sake?

Conclusion.—Jesus the best physician for this illness. Contemplation of His teaching, His life, His example, His suffering and His precious Blood the remedies. The practise of contentment makes man partake of happiness in this life and in the next.

SEXAGESIMA

The Free Will

"The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and other some fell upon a rock, other some fell among thorns, and other some fell upon good ground."—Luke viii, 5-8.

Theme.—The freedom of the human will, considered in three points:

(1) Is the human will free?
(2) To what extent is it not free?
(3) What influence has the true conception of freedom, or the lack of it, upon our moral conduct?

Introduction.—To every thinking person the thought has no doubt occurred whether he is really possessed of an entirely free will or not. The parable in to-day's Gospel may seem to indicate a lack of freedom in the human will, since the soil could not be said to be at fault if it was trodden down, filled with stones, or fruitful. People may say that man can not help if he is irritable, or without sympathy, that he was brought up among good or evil people, etc. Therefore, let us consider: Is the will of man really free or not?

I. (a) Contradicting the claim that we are not free. (aa) "Some persons have not the strength to rise from the mire of sin, therefore they are not free." This is not so. They have brought this condition upon themselves—and they will find it no easy task to extricate themselves from it; but nevertheless there have been numerous examples of such persons saving themselves. (bb) "The inclinations differ: to be virtuous comes easy to some people, for others it is difficult; therefore God must have destined some people to do good, others to be evil." This is not so. The beginning of everything is difficult; so it is of virtue, but practise and perseverance make it gradually an easy task. It rests with ourselves. (cc) "We ceased to be free after the fall of our first parents." No, their sin only weakened our will, but our freedom did not cease. God would not have given the Ten Commandments if man had not freedom either to obey or disobey them, and Jesus could not have redeemed us. That some accepted the redemption and others not,

shows that God has given men a free will. Council of Trent: "If any one asserts that man lost free will after the sin of Adam, let him be anathema!" Our Saviour has done sufficient to make it possible for us to be included, by faith, love and good deeds, in his merits. (dd) "God governs the world, therefore everything is done according to His will and nothing according to ours." Yes, He governs, and the good let Him willingly govern them, but the evil He can not guide, even though He often causes their evil deeds to turn to good account; for instance, the selling of Joseph, the betrayal of Judas, the persecution of Saul. The Apostle says: "Man hath no necessity, but having power of his own will; let him do what he will" (I Cor. vii, 36, 37). The freedom of our own will readily seen in our daily actions. God knows what you will do, but unless you bestir yourselves, you will be the sufferers.

(b) Proof of our free will. (aa) God created man after His own image, and the image of God includes the free will. "God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own council. He gave commandments and precepts" (Ecclus. xv, 14, 15). "The Lord is a spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (II Cor. iii, 17). (bb) Jesus gave us commandments and prohibitions: this shows that we may follow Him or not, as we wish; that we possess a free will. (cc) He promised reward and threatened with punishment. St. Jerome: "Where there is compulsion there can be no reward." (dd) A sinner acknowledges that he is the cause of the sins he commits, therefore, etc. (ee) The fact that we can regret our sins proves that we might have omitted them, therefore that we have a free will.

II. Man is free in his innermost being: He can desire to do right or wrong. But there are many obstacles, but also many encouragements.

(a) The body makes a slave of this one, the other wrests freedom from it.

(b) Some dispositions of the mind encourage, others hinder good intentions. Various conditions of the mind as of the soil.

(c) Education has powerful influence for good or evil.

(d) So has vocation.

(e) Man is led to virtue through divine grace.

III. Every tenet of faith is important for our life and actions, therefore also the teaching of free will. Fenelon: "Take away the free will, and there will be no vices, no virtues. Reward will be

ridiculous and punishment unjust, as each one does as he must and from necessity only."

(a) We have a free will, therefore let us take care of our temporal welfare, to achieve honor, health, long life, prosperity. We are not destined to all these, but we often have them within our reach.

(b) We have free will, therefore we are responsible for our sins, there is no excuse. Doing penance our duty.

(c) We have a free will: do not permit this precious treasure to become fettered through misuse! Do not become a slave to vices.

(d) We have a free will, but our freedom is often threatened by obstacles. Combat these obstacles to preserve your free will for the good of your immortal soul.

(e) Even though we have a free will, only through God's grace can we be really virtuous. Let us pray, therefore, humble ourselves, etc.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Jesus is With Us

"And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by."—Luke xviii, 37.

Theme.—Jesus is still the same and still with us.

(1) He still feeds the hungry.

(2) He still comforts the sorrowful.

(3) He still heals the sick and restores life to the dead.

Introduction.—The time during which Jesus wandered upon this earth, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, comforting the discontented, restoring life to the dead, was indeed a time of grace. The Gospel tells of the joy of the stricken ones when they had the opportunity of drawing near to the Lord, to ask and receive blessings. Let us remember that the Lord is with us now, as He was when as God-man He moved upon earth and associated with mankind.

I. Jesus still feeds the hungry.

(a) As God He created the world. He governs and sustains it. He multiplies the seeds in the field, and makes the earth produce the food necessary for the preservation of mankind.

(b) By word and example He taught the necessity of work.

Among Christian people there prevails as a consequence industry and thrift, a safeguard against want.

(c) He demands temperance in food and drink. This works as a protection against extravagance and waste, another safeguard against want.

(d) He commands charity and alms, and in this way those deprived of means are taken care of. Thus the Lord still provides for the feeding of the hungry.

II. Jesus still comforts the sorrowful.

(a) The earnest Christian who in spite of all his care and efforts finds himself not free from weaknesses, and is therefore sorrowful, is comforted by Jesus, who assures him that God looks upon the good intention, that the merits of His passion and death will make up for our shortcomings; that His grace will assist us in our struggle, etc.

(b) In privation, sickness and in the hour of death He consoles us with the remembrance of His sufferings, the agony of His death. He taught us to pray, and prayers bring comfort.

(c) When losing our loved ones by death Jesus consoles us with the thought that they have not really died, but have gone to a happier realm, and that we shall again meet them.

(d) In slander and prosecution we are consoled by remembering that Jesus was calumniated and persecuted, and that He, innocent and undeserving of this chastisement, bore this suffering with all meekness and patience.

(e) If our sins grieve us Jesus comforts us with the invitation to receive remission of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance.

III. Jesus still cures the sick and awakens the dead.

(a) There are many persons spiritually blind and afflicted with the leprosy of sin. Jesus still offers to cure them. Is not the cleansing from the darkest stains of hideous sin a miracle?

(b) Jesus by His grace calls many from a spiritual death, namely, the death of the soul by sin, which is a greater calamity than bodily death.

(c) Jesus has, finally, rescued us from eternal death. By His death He has atoned for our sins, and saved us from eternal damnation, and, furthermore, by instituting the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance He has given us the means to participate in His merits, thus escaping the eternal death to which our sins would have condemned us.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

The Obligation of Fasting

"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry."—Matt. iv, 2.

Theme.—The law of fasting.

(1) The history of fasting.
(2) The present law of fasting.
(3) Refutation of popular objections.
(4) Object and utility of fasting.

Introduction.—No commandment is less appreciated and less respected than the commandment of fasting. Some persons scorn it, others ignore it. Some persons think they do enough by abstaining from meat on Friday, and do not trouble themselves about fasting. Since the subject is a timely one let us give some consideration to it.

I. From the earliest times there is a record that fasting was considered a pious and meritorious practise. The heathens resorted to fasting when anxious to appease an offended deity.

(b) The Mosaic legislation prescribed a general fast day for the Jews: in times of great need the prophets ordained a fast, and with pious Israelites it was usual to fast of their own free will, sometimes twice a week. The prayer of the Pharisee tells us of this.

(c) Jesus did not discourage fasting but He denounced the hypocritical way in which the Pharisee fasted. Jesus Himself fasted often severely.

(d) The Apostles and the early Christians regarded fasting as a religious duty.

(e) Subsequently Popes, bishops and Church councils made fasting a commandment, frequently modifying the regulations as the times made it desirable and prudent.

(f) The original severity is nowadays greatly lessened. While formerly even butter and eggs were forbidden on fast and abstinence days, there is now but very little restriction upon the faithful, making it a very easy matter to comply with the law of the Church.

II. The present regulations, their discriminations and exemptions are: (explain them).

III. Refutation of popular objections:

(a) "Christ teaches that nothing that enters the mouth pollutes." The spirit and act of disobedience pollute the soul.

(b) "To Christians there is no distinction in food, no kind of food is sinful." Not the food but the transgression of the commandment! St. Augustine: "Fasting is abstaining from food and drink; though not for any reason that anything created by God might be sinful in itself."

(c) "The commandment is generally transgressed, therefore it should be abolished." So is the commandment of Christian charity usually transgressed, but that is no good reason to revoke this or any other law.

(d) "Fasting is injurious to health." This is not so. On the contrary, reasonable moderation in taking food is very beneficial. The Church does not ask anything unreasonable or detrimental.

(e) "In one family there are some who are dispensed while others are not. It is so troublesome and inconvenient to suit both at the same table." This can only be the case if good-will is lacking.

(f) "Lenten dishes do not agree with me." This excuse is an idle one. A little good-will can find no difficulty in complying with the law of abstinence. If the sacrifice is greater so will be the reward.

IV. Object and utility of fasting:

(a) Obedience and humility practised. "I humbled my soul with fasting" (Psalm xxxiv, 13).

(b) The flesh is subdued and the will strengthened. St. Cyprian: "Fasting subdues rebellion of the flesh and protects against the force of passion."

(c) Means of becoming charitable. St. Gregory: "He fasts in the right manner who shares his daily food with the needy."

(d) Means of penance. St. Augustine: "Through fasting I chastise myself so that God may spare me and come to my assistance." St. Thomas Aquinas: "Through works of penance restitution must be made to divine justice."

(e) Victory over the desire of the body, a powerful help to religious perfection.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

The Old Law and the New

"And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him." —Matt. xvii, 3.

Theme.—The chief distinctions between the Old and the New Law.

(1) In the Old Law error was frequent, in the New Law we have the full truth.

(2) In the New Law sanctity more easy to acquire.

(3) During the Old Law heaven was closed, to us it is open.

Introduction.—Those who surrounded Jesus at His transfiguration were the two chief persons in the Old Testament, together with the three chief apostles, the pillars of the New Law. This suggests our theme.

I. The Jews knew and acknowledged the one true God, but they knew Him as the stern judge and master, they did not realize His fatherly love and mercy, they knew nothing of the Holy Trinity. They realized that they possessed an immortal soul, but had no proper conception of spiritual blessedness. They were acquainted with the commandments of God, but of the virtues of purity, humility, love for the enemy, gratefulness in suffering, etc., they knew little. If they committed sin they could not be cleansed, if they possessed not Christ the Crucified, nor His merits and satisfaction.

II. Through sin the will of man has been weakened, he is inclined more to evil than to good. Man chose to learn what sin was, God permitted him to fall deeply into it. Virtues such as the saints practised, self-surrender to God, and refraining from everything evil, more within man's range since Christ. Christ obtained for us grace, He sent us the Holy Ghost, He instituted spiritual remedies, He left us His beautiful example. To us it is possible to avoid sin. The example of the saints proves it.

III. When man became disobedient to God He expelled him from paradise, and closed heaven to him. None, not even the just in the Old Law, could enter heaven, until Jesus by His redemption again opened heaven for mankind. Upon our death, if we are

perfect, or as soon as cleansed from personal sin, we may enter heaven.

Conclusion.—How fortunate we must consider ourselves compared with those that lived under the Old Law. We have the divine truth and know the path that leads to heaven. To us heaven is open. What terrible neglect if we do not make use of our opportunity.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

Penance Without Merit

"And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."—Luke xi, 26.

Theme.—Christians frequently deprive their works of penance of all merit, by

(1) doing them for appearance sake,
(2) placing the fault for their sins upon circumstances or persons,
(3) by contriving to spare a favorite sin.

Introduction.—From most pulpits of the Catholic Church the call to-day goes forth to do penance. To-day's Gospel and the approaching paschal time suggest this call. While you are well informed as to how to receive the Sacrament of Penance, you may not appreciate that certain defects in intention or confession interfere with the valid reception of this Sacrament. I will consider this point with you to-day.

I. King David's sins were forgiven because he did penance in full earnest. He said: "I have labored in my groanings" (Psalms vi, 7). King Saul, however, was not forgiven; he performed penance for appearance sake. He desired to be lauded by Samuel and the people. He said: "I have sinned, but honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel." And this sort of thing happens very often among us. Some persons receive the Sacraments to leave the impression of piety, because to neglect them would cause gossip among the neighbors, and because they wish to be regarded as good Christians. It would be better not to receive the Sacraments at all than to do so for appearance sake. Of one that does not receive the Sacraments it is said that he is as if excommunicated;

but at least he does not commit a sacrilege. Penance for appearance sake is no penance at all; instead of profiting the soul it burdens it with a grave crime.

(a) It is no penance because there is no sufficient examination of conscience, no upright confession. The fewer sins such persons find to confess the better they appear to themselves, and they wish to appear so to their confessor. Those really anxious for perfection are never at a loss to find many failings in themselves.

(b) There is no sincere sorrow, no resolution to amend. Sorrow there would be only for loss of reputation. They do not really wish to better themselves, but desire to appear before the world as zealous Christians.

(c) There is no satisfaction, no improvement. These people do not care to make restitution. After confession they seek the same sinful companions and occasions. At every confession they come with the same sins that they confessed before.

II. When God sat in judgment upon our first parents, Adam placed the blame upon Eve, and Eve accused the snake. It was plain, nevertheless, that both committed the sin with free will. There was no contrition, no self-accusing, no mark of reform. To place the fault upon others is another frequent habit.

(a) There is a wife who confesses that she is quick tempered, that she sins by anger, but she wants to excuse herself by blaming her husband for his provocation. The husband, to the contrary, explains that his wife is so unreasonable, and that therefore he is made to scold. Now, this is nonsense. Where is their Christian prudence, charity and patience? If there is temptation to sin, how foolish to blame the sin upon the temptation.

(b) Parents excuse their neglect of watching the conduct of their sons and daughters by saying their wilfulness makes it so difficult. A duty remains a duty no matter how difficult. Besides, is the wilfulness not the result of neglect?

(c) Often occupation, vocation, temperament are blamed. We can be virtuous in every honorable vocation; temperament will yield to a strong and earnest will.

(d) Some persons say they have no time for the pursuit of virtue. Yet they can always find time to satisfy their inclinations for worldly things. With serious intention they will find time also to pray, to examine their conscience, to go to Mass on Sunday and to receive the Sacraments.

III. When the army of David was drawn up for battle against the army of rebellious Absalom, David urged his men to bravery but exhorted them: "Save me the boy Absalom" (II Kings xviii, 5). How unjust! The soldiers of Absalom he wanted to exterminate, but not their leader! Thus we regret and confess our various sins, but would like to condone our favorite sin, although the others may have been induced by it. Remove the chief sin, like the chief leader of the army, and the rest will be easily conquered.

(a) You confess your fondness for dress, vanity! Your frivolity of conduct, your impious companionships you do not mention, though they are the unhappy occasions of sin.

(b) You confess that you curse and blaspheme. Why not acknowledge your bad temper, your brutality toward others?

(c) You confess that you are distracted during Mass, but you do not say it is your vanity to show your clothes that occupies your mind entirely, or that the persons with whom you go to church awaken in you sinful rather than pious thoughts. These are the chief obstacles to a good Confession. Examine your minds and see if you have been guilty of one or the other.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

How to Be Charitable

"And Jesus took the loaves: and when he had given thanks he distributed to them that were sat down."—John vi, 11.

Theme.—The proper manner of doing charitable deeds.

(1) With a liberal hand.

(2) With a kind and charitable heart.

(3) With a cheerful manner.

Introduction.—Jesus performed His magnificent miracle of charity with a liberal hand: by giving to the multitude such an abundance that much remained uneaten; with a kind and charitable heart: He did not question why they did not provide themselves with bread, or whether there were unworthy persons among the multitude; with a cheerful manner: by being indulgent and sympathizing. This should be our example in matters of charity.

I. He gives with a liberal hand who gives as much as his means will allow, who even denies himself some luxuries in order to give alms more amply.

(a) The wealthy should apply their abundance to help the needful. Their circumstances place them in the favorable position to be merciful and to ensure thus to themselves the mercy of God. "He that sows sparingly shall reap little; but he that sows freely shall reap much." The richest reward in store for them that feed the hungry, clothe the naked, etc. "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his soul."

(b) To the man of moderate means may be said: "Give as much as you can." The intention and the good-will count for much. The first Christians were not possessed of wealth, and still they practised charity in a great measure. You who work hard for a living have little time for prayer: let your alms and good deeds rise to heaven as part of your prayers.

(c) Even the poor can do much for each other. "If you have little, take care even to bestow willingly a little" (Tob. iv, 9). St. Ambrose: "There are very few, even among the poor, that can be excused from the duty of giving alms." The poor can share their bread with those that have none at all, they can care for each other in sickness and need, and their deeds of charity, performed at some personal sacrifice, will count as much, and more, than the thousands the rich give to charity.

II. (a) Some people give alms, but not with a charitable heart; they like to ask whether it is not the fault of people that they are poor, or whether they are worthy, etc. This is not the right charity. Our heavenly Father gives us much, though we are not worthy. Jesus Christ fed the thousand, and there were probably some among them who were unworthy. If the Lord would bestow His benefactions only upon the worthy, it would not be well for us.

(b) Some people use for their excuse the words: "He that does not work shall not eat." Is there at all times work for everybody? "Let those who caused their misfortune suffer for it." Have we the right to punish? "It is good that thou shouldst hold up the just, yea and withdraw not thy hand: for he that feareth God neglecteth nothing" (Eccles. vii, 19). Let us give with a charitable and merciful heart!

III. Some give alms but with bad grace, reproaching and advising in hurtful manner. Why is this wrong?

(a) Because it grieves the receiver, and makes his position still more miserable. "My son, in thy good deeds make no complaint, and when thou givest anything, add not grief by an evil word" (Ecclus. xviii, 15). St. Gregory: "Some persons scold the poor before they give the alms. By having the satisfaction that the poor person is compelled to take the scolding without defense they repay themselves for giving the alms. In giving the alms we should rather add kind words of sympathy and consolation."

(b) Giving without cheerfulness has no merit. St. Paul: "God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. ix). "He that showeth mercy with cheerfulness" (Romans xii, 8). St. Augustine: "If you distribute your bread among the poor with an unwilling heart you forfeit both the bread and the merit." St. Chrysostom: "To give cheerfully is an added alms." We should be careful, therefore, not only to heed our obligations to be charitable, but to be charitable in the right way so as to obtain eternal reward for our charitable acts.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

Reproaches Against the Church

"They took up stones therefore to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple."—John vii, 59.

Theme.—Stones were cast at the Lord, and they are still cast at His work, the Church. Let us consider:

1. The stones that are cast;
2. Who cast them.

Introduction.—Just as the Jews blasphemed Jesus, so do many blaspheme even in our days the Church of Christ, and cast stones at her.

I. At all times the enemies of God have raged against the Church. What has been the result? Our adversaries have been destroyed, and the Church comes from the struggle stronger and with renewed vigor. What are the reproaches made against the Church? The stones they cast at her?

(a) The Church is the refuge of the ignorant, they say. No institution has, as a fact, however, done more for art, science, and culture than the Catholic Church. The Popes, the bishops and the monks have been the greatest promoters of science; in the monasteries learning and art have found a home. The Church teaches that through sin the intellect was not destroyed but only darkened, and she therefore aids in enlightening it.

(b) They say also that the Church keeps conscience in fetters and destroys human freedom. The Church does not permit the secular power to enter her domain, because she must be free. She does not tolerate arbitrary laws of man in her affairs because she is of divine origin. The Church prescribes laws so that we may be free from sin, just as in a well governed state the freedom of its citizens is protected by laws that restrain unlawful acts.

(c) The Church is accused of fostering hatred and enmity against non-Catholics. She upholds her principles and condemns heresy, but for the individual she has nothing but love and indulgence, be he of her faith or not. Her prayers are for all people, her hospitals and asylums take the sick and destitue of all creeds. Catholics rarely assail those of different faith; they, as a rule, are the assailed.

II. Who are those that cast the stones?

(a) The ignorant. "You do not know my Father, of whom you say he is your God," said Jesus to the persecuted Jews. Only those who do not know the teachings of the Church, her institutions, her history can slander her. They that know all and are not blinded by sin will not be found casting stones.

(b) The worldling and the proud. Many of those that live in affluence have no patience with the Church's restraints and penitential practises. They deny the authority of the Church, because her laws are interfering with their self-love.

(c) The sinner. The Church is severe against sensuality, against fraud and against other trespasses of the divine and of the human law. The sensual, the dishonest, the intemperate, defy the Church and her teaching and resent her condemnation of their sinful practises.

PALM SUNDAY

Blessed Are the Meek

"Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek."—Matt. xxi, 5.

Theme.—Meekness is

1. Taught, practised and demanded by Christ;
2. Difficult, but not unattainable;
3. Ennobling, elevating and a means of perfection.

Introduction.—Jesus in His triumphal march entered Jerusalem, the city that had caused Him only suffering, and the people of which He knew would soon renounce, revile and slay Him. His desire was to save these people, theirs to humiliate and destroy Him. Behold therefore His meekness and how the words of the prophet in our text were fulfilled: "Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek." Meekness silently and patiently endures insults, and returns good for evil. Let us contemplate the divine example of meekness and profit by it.

I. (a) Jesus in His glorious Sermon on the Mount said; "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." We see how the Lord regards meekness as one of the great virtues. They who bear the offenses committed against them, for the sake of the Lord, are pronounced blessed; as likewise, they who in temptation humbly do not rely on their own strength but have recourse to God.

(b) On another occasion Jesus said; "Learn of me, for I am humble and meek of heart." Many are anxious to learn virtues from Jesus, but they do not regard meekness as one of them. They can not overcome their pride and sensitiveness.

(c) Jesus gave a magnificent example of meekness, when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss, so also when He replaced the ear of Malchus, when on the cross He prayed for His enemies, and on many other occasions.

II. (a) It cannot be denied that meekness is difficult to practise. Man's nature rebels against injury and insult. While probably only few people can reach perfection in the virtue of meekness, humility and love for an enemy, all must make an earnest effort to practise these beautiful qualities.

(b) This virtue is not unattainable, otherwise Christ would not have demanded it. Many have known and practised meekness. St. Augustine: "Could not these, and others, possess themselves of meekness, and why should I not be able to attain it?" Moses endured adversity with patience and meekness and it was said of him: "He was the meekest of all men on earth." David was abused and stoned by Semei, yet David did not punish Semei. St. Ignatius Loyola was of easily excited temperament, but he conquered it so that soon he became very meek and patient.

III. (a) Meekness includes self-control, and he is indeed virtuous who can control himself. Self-control is a greater adornment to man than knowledge, wisdom or bravery. No other accomplishment can be compared with it. No victory greater than over one's self.

(b) God is ever the same. "I am your Lord and will not change." So does a meek person endeavor to be unchangeable, in good or evil days. In this as in other aspects it is an ennobling quality.

(c) Only with difficulty can we merit heaven. Heaven is a great prize which must be earned. Meekness is a difficult virtue, but one the diligent practise of which will count much in working our salvation. The meek man conquers the strongest enemy to his salvation, namely, his worldly nature, his improper desires, and these overcome, the path to heaven becomes an easy one.

EASTER SUNDAY

The Meaning of the Resurrection

"And if Christ be not risen again your faith is in vain, for you are yet in your sins."—I Cor. xv, 17.

Theme.—The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation stone of Christianity for

1. In it the prophecies of the Messias were fulfilled.
2. In it the founder of our religion gave evidence of His Divine mission.
3. In it the resurrection of the body of man was foreshadowed.

Introduction.—Easter is our most joyous feast-day; the fact of

the Resurrection shines forth most brilliantly from to-day's Gospel: Christianity has its foundation in the fact of the Resurrection, and it was to stand or fall with it. St. Paul; "And if Christ be not risen," etc. The Resurrection an unimpeachable proof of the divinity of Christianity.

I. Of the Messias it was foretold that on the third day He would rise from the grave. Had Jesus not arisen from the grave, He would not have been the Messias, notwithstanding all other proofs. What prophecies relate to the Resurrection of Christ? "Him the Gentiles shall beseech, and his sepulcher shall be glorious" (Isaias xi, 10). "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption" (Psalm xv, 10). Without the Resurrection, the world would have been left in doubt and would have waited for one to arise from the dead.

II. Christ in support of His Divinity pointed to the fact of His Resurrection. As He drove the Jews from the Temple He said; "Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it." And when the Jews demanded more miracles, He told them; "For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." The Apostles likewise referred to the fact of the Resurrection. At the election of Matthew: "To be made a witness with us of his resurrection." Before the court: "Lord Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, God hath raised from the dead." "And with great power did the Apostles give testimony of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord." St. Paul: "And if Christ be not risen," etc. (text).

III. Christ performed other great miracles. He changed water into wine; He healed the sick; He gave life to the dead. These miracles have also been performed by some prophets and others, but Jesus is the only prophet that arose from the dead. The Resurrection therefore is the greatest miracle, and unassailable proof of His Divine power.

IV. Sin, and the punishment due to it, were blotted out, and because of the obedience and satisfaction of Jesus, God again considered us as His children. But one enemy was yet to be conquered and that was the death of the body. This enemy was conquered through the Resurrection of Christ; and thus the redemption was made complete. We shall arise from the grave even as He did on Easter morn.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Relapse into Sin

"Peace be to you."—John xx, 19.

Theme.—Relapse into sin is

1. Folly,
2. A great offense,
3. Dangerous.

Introduction.—During this Paschal time we become reconciled with God, by receiving the Sacraments. The words: "Peace be to you" are addressed to us, as they were spoken to the disciples. This peace shall remain with us if we do not sin again. It will be taken from us if we do so. In order to warn you against this relapse, I will explain what a serious thing it is.

I. Relapse is folly, for it again takes from man

(a) Peace. He had become reconciled with God: relapsing into sin he forfeits this reconciliation. His conscience was at peace: this peace is again disturbed. Mortal sin and the thought of its consequences fill the soul with fear. Peace with God and peace of conscience; these great treasures again lost.

(b) Freedom. He had been made free from sin and eternal punishment. Truly, a great achievement. The soul not burdened with the guilt of an offense against God. By relapsing into sin the burden is renewed, freedom is at an end. Gregory Nyssa; "Take care, that you are not bound in new fetters, and lose spiritual life; for it is uncertain if you will once more awaken to this life and be liberated from these fetters."

Is it not great folly to cast away peace and freedom?

II. Relapse into sin is a great offense for it is

(a) Ungratefulness. God gives pardon and remits our sins, and falling again into sin we despise His great mercy. Remember the fate of the ungrateful servant in the Gospel. Ungratefulness always regarded as a detestable fault. Chrysostom: "He who again relapses into sin is ungrateful and unworthy to be forgiven."

(b) Unfaithfulness. Before we were forgiven we promised not to offend God again. Therefore, to sin again is faithlessness to

our promise. A faithless person is considered among men as not deserving of any favor, can such a person rightly expect grace from God? "How exceeding base art thou become, going the same ways over again" (Jer. ii, 36).

III. A relapse into sin is dangerous, because through it

(a) Man loses by degrees his moral strength. A relapse into a malignant disease severely prostrates the patient and minimizes his chance for recovery. A soldier who has suffered defeat repeatedly, loses his self-confidence and will more easily be defeated thereafter. "A just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again: but the wicked shall fall down into evil" (Proverbs xxiv, 16).

(b) God may be less readily moved to forgive. There is no limit to God's forbearance, yet it is possible that He may permit a person constantly relapsing into sin to die in that state. Isaias: "Wo to you, apostate children, that add sin upon sin" (Isaias xxx, 8). "Wo to them that have lost patience, and that have (again) forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways" (Sir. ii, 16). Bernard: "He who after receiving forgiveness of sin again falls into the mire of sin, deserves the punishment of hell twofold."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Hirelings and Wolves

"But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth: and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep."—John x, 12.

Theme.—Dangerous to the sheep of Christ are:

(1) The wolves.

(2) The hirelings.

Introduction.—During Lent the Church has demanded penance from us, and Easterside brought forth a rich harvest of penitents. Many sinners have become reconciled to God by approaching the Sacraments. Sheep that had strayed have again entered the fold of Christ. Alas! If they all would remain as good and pious as they resolved to be. But there are many dangers from wolves

and hirelings, as Holy Scripture terms the enemies of the Church, and of the immortal soul.

I. Those may be considered as wolves:

(a) who defame in speech and writing the Catholic Church and the Catholic truths. Those godless people who revile bishops and priests; who attempt to heap scorn and ridicule upon the services, ceremonies and customs of the Church. And the more dangerous are these enemies the more subtle and covert they make their attacks. They seek to destroy the faith in their neighbors, and after faith has been destroyed the poor victims are hopelessly lost to the fold. Beware, therefore, of books, newspapers and magazines that make a profession of corrupting religious faith. Keep them out of your houses lest the poison of doubt affect the souls of those entrusted to your care. Avoid association with the scoffer and the impious.

(b) They who induce others to commit sin. The evil-minded man can not bear to see virtue in others, and he, therefore, endeavors to make them as corrupt as himself and to deliver them to sin. The seducers are clever in their work of corruption, and like their father in hell they tempt with sweet words. Your dishonest friend will persuade you to make gain in unlawful ways; the libertine seeks to make recruits for his foul practises, and such seducers are met with in every walk of life.

(c) They who persuade others to neglect duties. The seducer not only tempts others to sin, but he prevents them from doing good. Some godless fathers will not allow wife or children to attend to their religious duties. The religious man is urged by godless fellow workmen to become as they are. The temperate youth is induced by licentious comrades to participate in their excesses. The sheep can not associate with the wolf and escape death. A Christian should not associate with those who ridicule religion, with those that lead bad lives, for they are the wolves that seek the destruction of immortal souls.

II. Hirelings are sometimes found among those put in charge of others, namely:

(a) Parents. Where parents earnestly perform their duty the wolves can not easily enter the fold of the family. Bad books, bad companions, should not be permitted to enter into the home. St. Alphonsus: "Forbid, oh, mother, oh, father, your children to read bad novels and other harmful books; for they leave upon the young

an impression that robs them of devotion and tempts them to commit sin." A strict watch must be kept over all inmates of the house. Often the source of corruption to children is an unchaste servant. Hirelings are those parents who are remiss in the supervision of their charges.

(b) As hirelings are to be classed, moreover, employers who allow unrighteousness among employees while under their control, who encourage unlawful practises for the sake of gain, who further loose morals by a lack of supervision, etc.

(c) Hirelings, finally, are such temporal and spiritual superiors who neglect to do their duty in enforcing the rules that are necessary to further virtue and prevent sin and crime.

These, my dear Christians, are the wolves and hirelings that threaten the salvation of souls. Beware of the wolves and fortify your soul and your house against them, and examine your conscience as to whether you must not be classed among the hirelings.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Justice

"Joseph, a just man."—Matt. i, 19.

Theme.—Without justice there can be

(1) No faith.
(2) No love.
(3) No hope.

Introduction.—Justice in the usual sense allows to each one his own. But justice in a broader meaning is equivalent to righteousness and virtue. Such justice adorned St. Joseph, and it is one of the four great or cardinal virtues. Let us consider this great virtue.

I. (a) The world is the work of God and everything in it is ruled by Divine Providence. The rich are rich by the permission of God, and the poor are devoid of wealth by His dispensation. Justice must rule the acts of one as of the other. The property of the one and the just claim of the other are safeguarded by the law

of God, and he would be lacking in faith who would be guilty of injustice to his neighbor.

(b) He who steals, cheats or defrauds sins. He fears the eye of man. But the omniscient God he does not fear. He would appear not to believe in the ever-present and all-wise God.

(c) The Holy Ghost speaks to us through our conscience. He who sins through injustice scorns the voice of his conscience, he disbelieves in the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

(d) Finally, the unjust man does not seem to believe in a judgment by God, otherwise he would not do the things that will work his final ruin.

II. Without justice, no love!

(a) One who conspires to obtain an undue advantage over others shows a lack of love.

(b) If in important dealings with those under our supervision we unjustly give undue and unjust preference to favorites, Christian charity for the others is lacking.

(c) There can be no love for the neighbor if we fail in justice by judging rashly.

(d) There is no love if with the one hand we cheat and acquire unjust gain, though with the other we give alms and make donations.

III. (a) The unjust can not hope that a thing unrightfully acquired will bring him profit. A curse rests on it.

(b) He can not hope that his heirs will profit by it. "All bribery and injustice shall be blotted out and fidelity shall stand forever" (Ecclus. xl, 12). "A faithful man shall be much praised, but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent" (Prov. xxviii, 20).

(c) He can not hope that sufferings will save his soul; in his case they are not trials, but punishments.

(d) He can not even hope to save his soul by penance unless by restitution he shall rid himself of the unrighteous gain.

(e) His deathbed will be without hope if he clings to the wealth unjustly gathered. For the cheat there is no place in heaven.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Christian Friendship

"Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart." —John xvi, 6.

Theme.—Christian friendship.

(1) Its origin.

(2) Its duties.

(3) Its value.

Introduction.—The Apostles had been chosen to be friends of Christ, and to them He imparted His intentions and His sentiments. From them Jesus now took leave and their hearts became sad, for they realized the hour had come in which they must part with their divine friend. This offers occasion to speak on the subject of Christian friendship and to examine what should be its qualities.

I. Friendship is usually brought about by a companionship of one with another of equal age, rank and inclinations, each having some good qualities and virtues which the other recognizes and admires. There may be comradeship among wicked people, but true friendship is possible only among the righteous.

(a) Friendship originates in the esteem of good traits found in a companion. No true friendship can prevail among spendthrifts, idlers and sensualists, for they are not concerned about themselves, and much less about others. The same can be said of hypocrites, and persons of ungoverned temper and of jealous people. There can be no friendship among thieves or other bad persons; they may be chums as their interest or selfishness finds advisable and profitable, but that is not friendship. Furthermore, friendship is not found among the scoffers and godless; they lack faith, which is an indispensable quality in friendship.

(b) Friendship depends furthermore upon a harmony of views and inclinations. St. Augustine: "Friendship is a loving union in temporal and spiritual things." The Apostles were pure and God-fearing in mind and heart, and, therefore, they became the chosen friends of Jesus. A youth will hardly select for his intimate friend a man much older than himself; a learned man will not make

a close friend of an uneducated person, however much regard he may have for the other's virtue and noble character.

(c) While it is therefore to our credit if we possess friends, it is no disgrace to be without an intimate friend; it may be proof of our seeking virtues and characters of a high degree. To have many friends is not of profit. "Let one of a thousand be thy counselor" (Ecclus. vi, 6).

(d) Where should friendship principally exist? In the family, husband and wife, father and son, brothers and sisters, etc. Alas, hatred is often found where God has especially intended that friendship should prevail.

(e) Charity is a duty; we must love everybody, even our enemies; friendship, however, is not demanded, we can be real friends only to a few.

II. Friendship has also its duties and obligations, and sometimes demands even sacrifices.

(a) If we find evil traits and vicious inclinations in a friend we must terminate this friendship, for we are generally judged by the character of those with whom we associate, and we must avoid even the suspicion of evil behavior.

(b) If the character of our friend is good we must not be too exacting in little things. We are not perfect and can not demand this of others. St. Francis de Sales: "We must patiently bear the imperfections of our friend."

(c) A friend must stand by his friend in danger and in need. Mutual assistance is needful in human life. Jesus commended His blessed mother to the care and friendship of St. John.

(d) We must try and sanctify one another. The tempter uses sweet words, a true friend will not hesitate to tell you an unpleasant truth about yourself, though he will do it as gently as possible.

III. Why do good people long for friendship?

(a) Because friendship brings consolation in sufferings. If we are calumniated, if we are in great need, a friend is a great solace and help. "A faithful friend is a strong defense; and he that hath found him, hath found a treasure. A faithful friend is the medicine of life" (Ecclus. vi, 14, 16). "A friend shall not be known in prosperity, and an enemy shall not be hidden in adversity. In the prosperity of a man his enemies are grieved; and a friend is known in his adversity" (Ecclus. xii, 8, 9). St. Ambrose: "Friendship

increases our joys. If we have been fortunate we long to tell some one, and if we have a friend who shares our joy our satisfaction is much greater." "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm cxxxii, 1).

(c) Friendship encourages us to do good. If we have a virtuous friend we do not dare to do wrong in his presence. It is an essential quality of friendship that one endeavors to emulate the noble sentiments and good traits of the other.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Laxity in Prayer

"Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."—John xvi, 24.

Theme.—Excuses for laxity in prayer. Some of them are:

(1) "I can not pray; it will do me no good."

(2) "I do not like to pray."

(3) "It is not necessary."

Introduction.—In to-day Gospel Our Lord earnestly demands that we pray to Him. He makes this demand also in many other ways, and by His example teaches and encourages us to pray. The Church founded after His spirit and teachings has prayer for her object, and she is an everlasting prayer. And yet so many people neglect their prayers. What excuses do they make?

I. "I cannot pray," many of them say, and they explain this by saying:

(a) "I do not want for anything. I have my health and enough to eat; therefore, how can I pray for all this?" To them I would say, if you are so fortunate not to have any bodily necessities, your spiritual life is not so fortunate, you need grace, forgiveness of sins, etc. "First seek the kingdom of God." "We are always in danger of sin." "Call upon me and I will spare you in time of necessity." If you have no bodily necessities, others have, and we must pray for one another. "Give us this day," etc. And if we really think we have nothing to pray for, a thing that never happens, turn your attention to gratitude and thank the Lord from

whom your blessings flow. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving are pleasing to God and they will benefit your immortal soul.

(b) "I do not know how to pray." Pray as children pray, as the beggars or those in great need supplicate to awaken charity. They are never at a loss for words. Think earnestly of your needs and troubles, and the right prayer will come without difficulty, or use the various forms of prayer found in the prayerbook. St. Teresa: "It is not necessary to express thoughts in eloquent language; it is only necessary to commend to God the necessity of our souls."

(c) "I am a sinner." It is true that our prayers in the state of mortal sin have no merit for eternal salvation. But nevertheless the sinner may and should pray, otherwise no one ever could. Let the sinner acknowledge his wrong and make a perfect act of contrition, then God will listen to the prayer. Zacheus, Mary Magdalen, the thief on the cross, were sinners; they asked to be forgiven and were not refused.

II. "I do not like to pray."

(a) "I can not avoid distraction." We may become concerned because of our many distractions, but that should not keep us from praying. Other things which we undertake are not always accomplished at first; there are many obstacles, yet we work to overcome these obstacles. If with earnestness and with the aid of God's grace we use our strength it shall conquer those distractions. Even prayer with distractions, if we do not willingly indulge in the distraction, is of value. St. Teresa: "Not seldom Our Lord permits distractions in order to try us. We must suffer such distractions with humility and patience, and the time thus spent shall not be lost." The more effort we devote to prayer piously, the more meritorious it will be before God.

(b) "I have not the right mood for praying. I find no pleasure in it." St. Bernard: "There is nothing in this life that can fill the human heart with more satisfaction than a fervent prayer." Prayer need not be a pleasure, it should be performed as a duty. Our work may not always be a pleasure, but if we persevere in it we shall acquire a liking for it.

(c) "I do not find any consolation, or encouragement in it." Perseverance in prayer is necessary, and with perseverance we shall finally receive what we ask for if it is for our good. No reward without effort. Sometimes we may not ask for the right thing.

"You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss; that you may consume it on your concupiscence" (James iv, 3).

III. Many seek to shirk their duty of prayer with excuses such as:

(a) "God knows what I need." This is easily answered by pointing to Our Lord who Himself prayed often, and urgently recommended prayer. We pray not for the benefit of God, but for our own sake. We must acknowledge to God our necessity and weakness, we must thank Him for His benefits.

(b) "God blesses those also who do not pray. My neighbors seldom go to church, and yet they are wealthy and successful." How do you know that they never pray, or that some one does not pray for them? God may bless them because of the prayers of others. May they not possess some virtue which God rewards in this world because they make no claim upon happiness in the hereafter? If in His great mercy God sends His benefactions even to those who ignore Him, how much more readily will He come to the succor of those who pray to Him?

(c) "I am too busy." If we have much work we need much blessing, so that it may not be without success and without merit; and, therefore, we must pray. Prayer is the duty of a Christian, and it must be fulfilled. Long prayers are not necessary. Intention counts for more than quantity. A single pious thought is of more value before God than long but thoughtless prayers. Make your prayers short if you have much work to do, but pray regularly and with devotion.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Wrong States of Conscience

"Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he hath done a service to God."—John xvi, 2.

Theme.—Of the wrong states of consciences. There are

(1) Perverse consciences.

(2) Dull consciences.

(3) Scrupulous consciences.

Introduction.—Man possesses a faculty of the soul that urges him to do good, and that warns him against evil; that praises and

censures; that leads either to eternal salvation or eternal destruction. This faculty is lawgiver, judge and executor of the law all in one. It is the voice of God in man, and it is called conscience. Conscience is a most precious gift. Without it there can be no virtue. But conscience is not incorruptible. In to-day's Gospel Jesus says: "Yea, the hour cometh," etc. Jesus, therefore, tells us that there are perverse consciences, such that will consider the death of the Saviour and of Christians as a meritorious deed. There are besides such perverse consciences other kinds of wrong consciences, namely; dull and over-scrupulous consciences. The dull conscience underrates evil, the over-scrupulous conscience considers as evil some actions that are really harmless and indifferent.

I. If reason is misled, if false and irreligious principles take root, conscience becomes so perverted that it considers evil deeds to be allowed and even commanded, and it will hanker after evil rather than after good deeds.

(a) Example. The Jews had the saying: "An eye for an eye," and they considered hatred of the enemy as the proper thing. When they persecuted the Christians they believed they were doing so out of zeal for their religion. The pagan emperors believed that they performed a good deed by maltreating and killing the Christians, the despisers of their idols. History is full of examples of perverted consciences, of instances of men committing all sorts of outrages in the conviction that they were doing a necessary and permissible thing.

(b) But we do not have to go to the past ages for instances of perverted consciences, we have them right here among us. Just tell a child to annoy the neighbor or play tricks on him; he will do so and will think he is doing right. Persuade him to steal, and praise him for his clever deed; he will think he has done a great and good deed. Preach into him that the authorities are maltreating the people and he will hate them all his life.

(c) From this will appear the value and necessity of a good education. The child must learn from his earliest youth what is really right, and what God commands: Love, sympathy, forgiveness, purity, righteousness, justice, etc. Conscience then dwells on these things, warns against violations of these laws and insists on complying with them.

(d) Virtue is thus firmly implanted. He who has a perverted conscience, and believes he is doing right, when in reality he is com-

mitting evil, is not happy. Satisfaction can be found only in obeying the laws of God.

II. Conscience is a power, but it can be weakened; it is a sword that can be made dull. By influence of a bad will, by continuous practise of evil actions, conscience becomes dull just as through the practise of good deeds it becomes active and alert.

(a) Vain people are among those with dull consciences. Their conscience may be stirred, but the good will is lacking, and the voice of conscience is overruled by pride and self-satisfaction. There are also those who are forever seeking pleasure, who lead idle and loose lives. The miser's conscience is dulled by the steady thought that he must care for himself, that money and wealth are necessary. The habitual sinners are possessed of dulled consciences, dulled by the constant practise of favorite sins, and by the excuses which they manufacture to excuse their bad inclinations.

(b) Consciences may be dulled and put to sleep. But such a conscience will often have a rude awakening. Maybe it will be the dreadful awakening on the deathbed. Conscience then takes awful revenge on its seducer.

III. An over-scrupulous conscience is not so frequent as the perverted and the dull conscience. But it is also to be guarded against.

(a) What is the fault of this conscience? It exaggerates sins, considers venial sins mortal sins; makes sins out of indifferent actions, it may go so far as not to believe in remission of sins, and to doubt in the grace of God. Faith is lacking there. Such a condition of conscience is a terrible misfortune for those who give themselves up to it.

(b) Where does this over-scrupulous conscience originate? Often from some bodily ailment. Often it is the result of a great injustice suffered, often brought about by remorse over a grave sin.

(c) What can be done with such unfortunates? Spiritual remedies frequently fail to help them. The Sacraments are often avoided by them. The physician can usually render good service by relieving such sufferers of their bodily ailment. Exercise in fresh air, a change of scene, etc., have often helped. Prayers should be offered for these unfortunates to obtain for them from God relief from this condition.

(d) Let us not confine ourselves to prayers for daily bread and for health. Let us pray particularly for the eternal salvation of

ourselves and of those dear to us. Venial sins that may burden our conscience may be wiped out by prayer, and in the case of mortal sins prayers will help us to awake sincere acts of contrition and to avoid a relapse into sin. If, after our sins are forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance, the thought of them still troubles our conscience, we may put it at ease by resolving to trust and hope in God's mercy and our Saviour's merits.

Conclusion.—Happy the persons with a righteous conscience. Such a conscience is the pledge of eternal bliss, if it is allowed to guide our actions.

PENTECOST

Peace

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth."—John xiv, 27.

Theme.—Through the Holy Ghost we receive peace from Jesus, namely:

1. Peace with God.
2. Peace with ourselves.
3. Peace with our neighbor.

Introduction.—In to-day's Gospel we are promised something great and glorious: God the Father and the Son will abide with us; the Spirit of God will remind, teach and comfort us, Christ will give us peace. "Peace I leave with you." To-day, therefore, is the feast of our close reunion with God; we are recreated through the Holy Ghost; this is the feast of peace. Let us consider how Christians may obtain this peace through the Holy Ghost.

I. Without the Holy Ghost there can be no peace with God; through the Holy Ghost there is imparted to us faith, love, hope, grace, virtue; therefore peace with God.

(a) He who does not believe in the Holy Ghost, His inspirations and His teachings, has no confidence and no hope, he is delivered to uncertainty, and therefore he has no peace. He who believes confides and trusts in God, and so has true peace with God.

(b) Without the Holy Ghost there can be no love of God, therefore no devotion, no prayer. Self-love and pride will rule and bring dissatisfaction and discord. He who loves God through the Holy Ghost will receive the peace of God, a peace which the world can not give.

(c) Without fortitude and confidence inspired by the Holy Ghost the fear of sin committed will haunt the deathbed. "There is no peace to the wicked" (Isa. xlviii, 22). "And the way of peace they have not known" (Ps. xiii, 3). Through the Holy Ghost we receive the grace of repentance, and with it the hope of a better life, and so we die in peace.

II. (a) The sinner experiences an inward struggle. The spirit and the flesh in him wrestle for mastership; he has no peace. Ask the devotees of sin whether they find gratification and peace in their debauches. If they will speak the truth they will admit that they are far from it.

(b) The virtuous man has, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, the right spirit reigning in him. St. Chrysologus says: "Peace is the surest indication of a good conscience." And St. Alphonsus of Ligouri tells us: "He that would desire to possess internal peace must first conquer his unruly passions." Peace reigns in the house of God. Therefore if we are temples of the Holy Ghost we are possessed of peace.

III. That peace can not abide where the Holy Ghost has been driven out by sin is proved by the discord in many families where the practice of virtue has given way to strife, neglect and vice. We may see the same among neighbors, who do not lead a godfearing life. There is no peace. The operation of the Holy Ghost is lacking. St. Paul: "Why should there not be one heart where there is one faith? Why not one mind where there is one God?"

(b) If we possess the Holy Ghost we are well disposed toward all mankind, and act toward them accordingly. We live in peace with them even if others offend and injure us. Keep peace for the love of God, so that after our life here is ended we may partake of the reward promised by Our Lord to the peaceful, who shall be called children of God.

TRINITY SUNDAY

The Divine Names

"Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."—Matt. xxviii, 19.

Theme.—The three divine names are:

1. The essence of our holy faith.
2. The well spring of true virtue.
3. The source of our consolation and the pledge of our happiness.

Introduction.—By our belief in the Holy Trinity we separate ourselves from pagans, Jews and Mohammedans, and by dedicating this day to the commemoration of the mystery of the Holy Trinity we give solemn expression to this faith. What are the three divine names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost to us?

I. There are in use by the Church several forms of creed: The Apostles' Creed, which we learned in school from our Catechism; the Nicene Creed, said during Holy Mass, and the Tridentine Creed, which emphasizes the principal teachings of the Catholic Church against the errors of Protestants. The shortest profession of our faith is: I believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, or, I believe in the three divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. This profession includes that I believe in God the Father, His divine nature and His works; in Our Lord, the Redeemer, His teachings and institutions; in the Holy Ghost and His work. This includes all Christian truths. In the words: "I believe in the three divine Persons" the Christian faith is expressed in the shortest form. We can believe in the Holy Trinity even though we can never comprehend the mystery. We even must believe in it, for Jesus says: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Therefore Our Lord, and the Holy Ghost, as also the Father must be God. With the profession of this belief, expressed in the sign of the Cross, we begin all prayers and ceremonies of divine service, as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Vespers, the Way of the Cross, morning and evening prayers, etc. A frequent renewal of our belief in God and the Holy Trinity is most salutary and beneficial. St. Augustine exhorts us to affirm our creed every morning and evening and often during the day.

II. The pagans practised many virtues because experience and wisdom taught them how health and welfare are promoted by a virtuous life. The Jews practised virtue because they feared the consequences of breaking the laws. The good Christian, however, avoids sin and performs good works out of love for his heavenly Father, out of gratitude toward the Saviour, and in honor of the Holy Ghost; because our heavenly Father created us, Our Lord died for our salvation, and the Holy Ghost enlightens and guides and sanctifies us.

Let us consider some virtues that are produced by the faith in the Holy Trinity.

(a) By belief in this unfathomable mystery we subject our reason in something which we do not readily understand, to the revealed word of God.

(b) We are encouraged to pray because we pray to God the Father in the words of Our Lord and through the grace of the Holy Ghost.

(c) Obedience toward our heavenly Father is awakened in us by the example of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, who fulfilled the mission given them by the Father.

(d) Humility is increased when we realize that we are the weak and insignificant creatures of the Father, that Our Lord died on the Cross because of our iniquities, and that without the Holy Ghost we can not become or remain virtuous.

(e) Christian virtue is exercised when we remember that all men are, like ourselves, children of the heavenly Father, brothers and heirs of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost.

III. (a) It is consoling to know that almighty God is protecting us, that He is our loving Father, that He is ready in His divine mercy to forgive us our trespasses if we sorrowfully return to Him.

(b) It is consoling to know that Jesus Christ has brought divine truth to us from heaven, that He has again made us children of God, opened heaven for us, etc.

(c) It is consoling to know that the Holy Ghost governs the Church of God, preserves her from error, inspires and strengthens her, etc.

Let us, therefore, praise the glorious mystery of the Holy Trinity and frequently avow our faith in God and His three divine Persons, until at the end of time our faith will be rewarded by admission to the presence of the Holy Trinity.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Neglect to Receive the Sacraments Frequently

"For my flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed."—John vi, 56.

Theme.—Why do many people fail to come frequently to the Sacraments?

1. Because they give preference to their daily occupation.
2. Because they claim that they do not comprehend the mystery of the Holy Eucharist.
3. Because they claim that they are not worthy.

Introduction.—Holy Communion is not received as frequently as it should be, not as frequently as the great mystery warrants, or as men need it, or as the Church desires, or as Jesus demands it when He said: "My flesh is meat indeed," etc. Let us discuss the reasons that keep people away from a frequent reception of the Sacraments.

I. Many are so wrapped up in their occupations that they say they have no time. What may we say of such Catholics?

(a) It is safe to say that no one has so much work to do that he can not find time to receive the Sacraments. People who give this excuse usually have sufficient time for recreation and amusement. The salvation of our souls is the most important occupation. "What doth it profit a man," etc.

(b) The duties of our station in life are important, but the duties of the Christian life are more important. With a little good will and earnest effort neither need be neglected for the other.

(c) If we fulfil our duties as Christians, unite ourselves with Jesus, and strengthen ourselves through Him, our duties become lighter, more fruitful, and pleasing to God. He who keeps the Sabbath holy finds himself in better shape, mentally and physically, for the work of the week. He who says his morning prayers and frequently attends Holy Mass will find himself encouraged to work with the Grace of God, and the consciousness of being at peace with God will benefit him in the discharge of his daily duties. In the same and greater measure will the reception of the Sacraments benefit mind and soul.

II. Many say the mystery is too deep. They can not understand it. What may we say of such Catholics?

(a) According to their reasoning we could not dare to do many other things. There are many mysteries surrounding us in nature. How plants grow is a mystery for instance, how nourishment changes into flesh and blood; while we see the effect of electricity, nobody has yet discovered what it is.

(b) Our holy faith obliges us to believe in the divine presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

(c) We must humble ourselves and accept the word of the Lord.

III. Some say they do not consider themselves worthy; but there is generally some other reason back of this excuse.

(a) They do not, perhaps, desire to better themselves. They know that with Jesus in their heart they will be expected to become better, and they do not want to. They are addicted to sinful ways and habits, and would rather serve the devil than God.

(b) They are unwilling to place themselves in the right state of mind and conscience for the reception of the Sacraments. They are possessed of spiritual indifference.

(c) Earnest-minded persons who realize their nothingness before God also remember that they can wipe out their sins by penance, and that Jesus instituted the blessed Sacraments not for angels, but for sinful yet penitent men, that by their use they may work their salvation.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Our Dealings With Sinners

"And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."—Luke xv, 2.

Theme.—How should we act toward sinners?

1. We should love them.
2. We should avoid harmful association with them.
3. We should try to reform them.

Introduction.—To the question how Christians should act toward sinners the example and teaching of Jesus gives the answer.

Just as He has done, and as He would do were He in our position, so also must we do, then we shall not err. There is the difference, however, that Jesus as God could not be contaminated by sin, therefore He could associate with the sinner without the danger that may threaten us. How, then, should we act toward the sinner, after the example of Jesus?

I. Jesus loved the sinner. He came to this earth because of him. He gave His Precious Blood for the sinner. Hence we must love the sinner. What claim have sinners upon our love?

(a) Their souls are of great value; they are the creatures and images of God, like ourselves purchased by the Blood of Jesus Christ and called to be heirs of the heavenly kingdom.

(b) They are in need of our love. They are most unfortunate, therefore we must have sympathy with them. They need our prayer. To forgive an offense is the supreme act of charity, and this act we can practise toward sinners.

(c) This love of sinners is the most pure and unselfish. Good and virtuous persons attract us and we may enjoy their society, but the sinner, on the contrary, repels us, and if, in spite of all this, we love him, then our love is certainly unselfish.

(d) We must hate and detest sin and scandal; the person, however, the sinner, we must love. To make this distinction may be difficult to many people, but it is taught by our Saviour's example.

II. Jesus shunned the hypocrites and the deceitful. In many cases also we must flee them. But how can this agree with the love of them?

(a) If the sinner realizes that he is avoided by decent people, he often comes to his senses, and his eyes are opened to the hideousness of his ways. While we should love the sinner, we are not expected to make an intimate friend of him.

(b) It is necessary to avoid a person inclined to sin, especially if our presence or company may become an occasion for sin to him. So, for instance, we must avoid an intemperate man, if he would make our call an excuse for excesses.

(c) If a sinner is unresponsive to admonitions a great deal of prudence must be used in dealing with him. Uncautious or untimely interfering may only make matters worse.

(d) It is our duty to love ourselves as well as to love our neighbor. True self-love consists mainly in avoiding sin, in shunning the harmful company of the wicked.

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III. Jesus Christ came to sinful mankind in order to save it. What He did we must do. We must reasonably use our opportunities to draw sinful men from their bad ways and seek to save them.

(a) In heaven there is infinite joy over a sinner who does penance; let us help to lead erring souls to penance, so that we may partake of the heavenly joy. We can perform no greater good than to bring back the sinner to the path of virtue.

Let us, therefore, direct our Christian charity most especially to those who have been so unfortunate as to fall into sinful habits. It is not for us to judge and censure them. As we expect mercy and leniency from the divine Judge, so must we exercise mercy and indulgence to our neighbor.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Try Again

"Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing: but at thy word I will let down the net."—Luke v, 5.

Theme.—"At thy word I will try again" should be our maxim:

1. In distressing doubt.
2. In our dealings with others.
3. In unsuccessful undertakings and in suffering.
4. In apparently unheard prayers.

Introduction.—The Apostles labored in vain throughout the night. They were discouraged, they decided to give up the work and return home. Our Lord came and commanded them to again let down their nets. St. Peter answered: "Master, we have labored," etc. Peter meant to say: "At thy word I will try again." And they were successful. We should make these words our maxim.

I. Many people are afflicted with doubts, often against their will. The evil spirit seeks always to destroy faith. He suggests doubts, and man becomes troubled and suspicious. Then should be remembered the words of Jesus: "He that does not believe is already judged." We shall contemplate the maxim in this connection.

(a) Some doubt the immortality of the soul, the existence of

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heaven and hell, and they begin to think that after death all is over. Alas, how mistaken are these people, and how dangerous their condition! They should resolve: "I will believe, I will live according to Jesus' teaching." Then they will conceive that there must be another life. "At thy word, because thou, O Lord, hath so taught, I will believe in the immortality of the soul."

(b) Others doubt that the punishments awaiting the sinner in the hereafter will be severe and eternal. These people should earnestly consider how terrible sin is, how presumptuous the impenitent sinner, and it will not be difficult for them to accept the word of God in these matters.

(c) Many doubt, especially in their times of affliction, God's goodness, wisdom and justice. We should not allow such notions to take hold of us. The word of God will instil in us confidence, consolation and strength to persevere.

(d) For many the incomprehensible mysteries of our faith, as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Divine Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, etc., give occasion for doubt. They should consider that only in the obedient acceptance of these truths our faith is meritorious, that our finite understanding can not comprehend infinite mysteries, that all shall be made clear to us in the hereafter.

II. With indifferent and unwilling persons we often lose courage. We are too ready to leave to themselves those who are not easily guided or reformed; we do not persist in helping them, in forgiving them. But does God act in this manner? His forbearance is inexhaustible. Let it, therefore, be our maxim: "Try again."

(a) John, the evangelist, took a special interest in a certain young man and spent much time and care in teaching him. This young man got into evil ways and became a robber. John, nevertheless, persevered and finally saved the young man. Fathers, mothers and guardians should not cease to try to reform children that have turned out evil; try again!

(b) You have done much for this or that brother, sister or child, and they do not appreciate or thank you. Should you desert them? No. Persist in doing your Christian duty; try again.

(c) Some one has often been insulted and has forgiven the insultor. But the offender continues his insults. May the offended person cease to forgive? No, to obey the words of the Lord, he must forgive again and again, yea seventy times seven.

III. In failure and in adversity the maxim "try again" gives us courage, and will assist us to accomplish our end.

(a) The work is not successful! Do not become impatient, but try again in the name of God. If your trees do not bear fruit you do not immediately cut them down, but use more care and try again. Your household may not be as it should. Do not give up courage, but with renewed vigor try again.

(b) Enemies surround us and our friends desert us without our fault. What shall we do? Love them, bless them, and put our trust in the Lord.

(d) A man may be placed in a position of utter despair, where he can not help himself, and where he sees no end to his difficulties. What shall he do? He should bear patiently the trials sent him, and recommend his earnest efforts to God; better times will come.

IV. We often ask for many favors from God; that we be freed from suffering, to have our wishes gratified, that our temptations should cease, for grace and strength. And it may appear to us that our prayers are not heard. And again if we are not cured from illness, not freed from temptations, etc., we cease to pray. We lack perseverance. "Try again, at thy word." Remember the Lord's words:

(a) "Ask and you shall receive"—at least consolation and hope! These we shall positively receive.

(b) "Seek and you shall find"—at least a way out of our trouble.

(c) "Knock and it shall be opened." Resignation to the will of God.

(d) Each one that asks shall receive, that seeks shall find, that knocks to him shall be opened. If we pray in the right manner and perseveringly, and if what we ask for is good or necessary we shall be heard.

Conclusion.—Let us then always, "Try again." In the name of Jesus we shall conquer all things if we but try.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Meekness

"But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment."—Matt. v, 22.

Theme.—Meekness.

1. The divine nature of meekness.
2. The power of meekness.
3. The blessings of meekness.

Introduction.—Jesus Christ was meekness itself. Though He suffered injustice, He was just. Though He was scorned by others, He did not scorn them. In truth He says of Himself: "I am meek of heart." When, in the eight beatitudes, He proclaimed the great virtues and their reward He said: "Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land." And in to-day's Gospel Jesus again demands meekness by condemning its opposite, namely, anger and hatred. I will to-day speak of meekness.

I. To prove the divine and lovable nature of meekness I will quote examples: from the world, from the community and from the family.

(a) From the world. If a worldly ruler is just, wise, energetic, etc., he is admired and respected. But if he is also meek, if he forgives and condones, he wins the love of his people. If a general accomplishes great and daring feats, if he conquers the enemy in battle, he is greatly praised and honored; but if he is also indulgent and generous toward the defeated our heart goes out to him. If a man is very learned, he is esteemed for his knowledge. But if he is also meek, if he generously imparts information to the unlearned, if he patiently endures contradictions, if in a gracious way he corrects erroneous views of others, then he is vastly more popular.

(b) From the community. If rich men are charitable and amiable toward the poor, if the poor do not envy the rich, then there is peace and harmony in the community. "Bear ye another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi, 2).

(c) From the family. How pleasant the picture of a father who

bears meekly the petty annoyances of children; of a housewife who suffers injustice rather than cause dissension by arguing; the servant who patiently takes undeserved harsh words; the child who obediently pays attention to admonitions and advice.

II. It is thought by some that meekness is befitting only in those of subordinate position; that it is of no help or value for others. Let us see if that is true.

Meekness conquers irritableness. Man is a more or less irritable and sensitive creature. May we not consider him deserving of respect who with the grace of God conquers his quick temper? Did not meekness produce in him an effect of the greatest value? But meekness is of value not only to its possessor, it exercises its benign influence in his dealings with others. Much strife and quarreling will be avoided if one of the debating parties is possessed of meekness. "A mild answer breaketh wrath; but a harsh word stirreth up fury" (Prov. xv, 1).

III. They say meekness can not inspire respect nor esteem. On the contrary, meekness always inspires esteem and brings rich blessings.

(a) Meekness guards against wrong. A meek person will not use improper, injurious or insulting language. In this way meekness avoids contention and protects against wrong and injustice.

(b) Meekness rebukes. A meek man patiently makes allowance for his brother's irritability. How ashamed his opponent will feel when he realizes how much more sensibly and manfully the meek man acts.

(c) Meekness converts. "My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be loved above the glory of men" (Ecclus. iii, 19). St. Vincent of Paul exclaimed: "I am eighty-four years of age and have censured with severity only three times. And these three times everything went wrong as a result, while with meekness I accomplished all things without fail."

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Lesson of the Gospel

"They took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets."—Mark viii, 8.

Theme.—Our duty to avoid wastefulness may be summed up in the following admonitions:

1. Practise frugality.
2. Avoid avarice.

Introduction.—In to-day's Gospel we have a beautiful example of economy. Though the multitude were fed, and though Our Lord could again have supplied them with food by His almighty word, yet He ordered the crumbs to be gathered and saved. This suggests to-day the subject of economy. The virtue of economy stands between the opposite vices of extravagance and avarice, and it is a difficult virtue, as it must be on guard against both these vices. Some persons are extravagant so as not to appear miserly, and others become misers so as to avoid extravagance. In our two admonitions, however, our duties in regard to economy are fully contained.

I. Practise frugality. Save, so that you may be enabled to attain higher purposes. We must seek reasonably to retain what we earn, and strive to honestly acquire what is needed. Do not scorn trifles. By small savings many have amassed great wealth. The Apostles gathered the crumbs that were left. The purpose of economy must not be the possession and hoarding of wealth, but a proper and reasonable use of wealth. Why principally should we economize?

(a) We, or those dependent upon us, may in time of need make good use of our savings. Many suffer want in feeble old age because they have not saved in the time of their strength. The spendthrift often wastes in one night enough to keep a number of poor people for some days. In prosperous times we must save, for days of need will follow. Joseph of Egypt gathered in the seven fruitful years sufficient to last through the seven unfruitful years.

(b) We gain respect and influence. The word of the desti-

tute, as a rule, has no weight. This is a truth that is proved every day, and it is often asked complainingly: "Does money produce intellect?" But such is the way of the world, and there must be some good reason for it. He that does not secure for himself a state of independence is not considered capable of giving counsel to others or to lead in public affairs. And he that depends on others can not always speak his mind freely. This rule, of course, has exceptions.

(c) Economy protects against vice, and has many virtues in its train. Will an economical person be intemperate? Will he allow himself to be idle? Will he allow himself and his relatives to be luxurious? Rather will he exercise faculties given him by almighty God. The economical are in a position to perform good deeds with their wealth. The story is told of some men who gathered contributions for a charitable purpose. They came to a house where they found the owner chiding his servants for not economizing in a certain small matter. The men expected in consequence to be sent their way empty handed, but instead of that they received a handsome contribution.

(d) Piety and respect for God's creation demand it. The pious and religious man has in mind the goodness of God in providing food, etc. He casts aside nothing that can be made use of; he will not spend the money that he earned with God's grace for idle things, luxuries or sinful amusements, because he will not misuse the gifts of God.

II. Avoid avarice. The gain of money and earthly possessions is not the aim of life. These things are the means of life. There are nobler possessions which we should seek to secure in preference to wealth. What are they?

(a) Health. Without adequate bodily nourishment we can not live. The harder a man works and the more strength he exerts, the more nourishment he will need. There are people who work hard, but who do not give their body proper nourishment, not because they are poor, but because they are miserly. As a rule such people do not live to an old age, they sink into an early grave. In this they differ not from the intemperate man who through his excesses shortens his life. Our lives are given us by God, and we must provide for them and preserve them.

(b) Honor. How can we have honor before God if we sell our immortal soul, God's own image, for gain and money? How can

we establish honor among our fellow men, if we only desire to reap and not to sow, to gather, but not to give? How can we be numbered among the conscientious if we close our ears and heart to the cry of those in need, whose sufferings we could alleviate by some small gift? The miser is ridiculed and despised. People delight in forcing him to spend some of his wealth. "Honor to whom honor is due," and it is due to him who is ready to give at the right time.

(c) An amiable and cheerful disposition. Have you ever seen a miser happy? He can not be; his hour of leisure he would rather employ to gather riches; he even dislikes to see other people enjoy themselves. "A covetous man shall not be satisfied" (Eccles. v, 9).

(d) Virtue and eternal salvation. Charity is an essential of virtue, and to the charitable heaven is promised. "I was hungry," etc. "Do not gather riches," etc. He who is miserly is not charitable. The Christian is obliged to contribute to the support of the church, of orphans, missions, etc. The miser neglects these duties. The money which he thus saves will be a curse rather than a joy.

Conclusion.—I have made it clear that the happy medium between the extremes of wastefulness on one hand, and avarice on the other, is the virtue of frugality or economy, and the divine example related in to-day's Gospel should be an incentive for us to practise this virtue.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Morning Prayer

"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."—Matt. vii, 17.

Morning prayer is demanded.

1. By reason.
2. By Holy Scripture.
3. By precept and usage of the Church.

Introduction.—In to-day's Gospel Jesus demands good deeds. By the belief that good deeds are necessary we distinguish our-

selves from the Protestants. Good deeds will enable us to escape eternal punishment and to merit eternal salvation. Each and every day we should perform good deeds.

A day without a good deed is lost for our eternal welfare. We shall hardly perform good deeds during the day, if we do not begin the day with God, with morning prayer. It will be so much easier for us to perform good deeds if we begin the day with prayer. Morning prayer is demanded, because,

I. Man has reason. Reason is a guide even for those who have not the good fortune to know of a Divine Revelation, and we know that even the heathen begin the day with prayer.

(a) The savages, upon rising in the morning, prostrate themselves and pray to the rising sun, or to the brook, the trees or whatever their idols may be.

(b) It is regarded as proper that children should greet their parents in the morning. We are children of the all-gracious heavenly Father, and should we not greet and adore Him as the day begins?

(c) Reason tells us that there is a great, almighty, omniscient Being. Where do the riches of the earth come from? Whence the order in all things? Who created a conscience within us? It follows, therefore, that we should adore God, the Creator and Preserver, and turn to Him in the morning. We feel the new strength received overnight. Therefore, thank Him. Pray for guidance and assistance, for we shall be exposed during the day to dangers of body and soul.

II. We who are Christians are bound by the Scriptures, we must do what they teach us to do. There are many examples and precepts in the Holy Scriptures with regard to morning prayer.

(a) Of Moses they relate that in the morning he retired and prayed; after that only were the people to come to him with their requests. First, then, we must occupy ourselves with God, afterward with men.

(b) According to the Mosaic legislation all first fruits of harvest and cattle had to be offered as a sacrifice to God. The first fruits of our reason, our first thoughts should, therefore, be devoted to God.

(c) King David says in one of his psalms: "To thee I watch at the break of day."

(d) In the Book of Wisdom we read: "We ought to adore thee at the dawning of the light." A plain precept.

(e) Ecclesiasticus: "The wise man will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the most high." As a reward he is promised: "For if it shall please the Lord, he will fill him with the spirit of understanding, and he shall direct his council." Glorious, true prophecies.

(f) Mark said of Jesus: "Rising very early, going out, he went into the desert place; and there he prayed." As Jesus did so we must do.

III. We are not Christians only, but Catholics, and as such we must regulate our lives according to the precepts and usage of the Church.

(a) Of the early Christians the pagan philosopher Plinius wrote to the Emperor Trajan: "They assemble before dawn to sing the praises of God." Morning prayer was, therefore, taught by the Apostles.

(b) Formerly common morning prayer was strictly practised in all Christian families. This beautiful custom did not originate by individual choice. It was evidently handed down by tradition, and, therefore, established by the early Church.

Some may say: "I have no prayerbook handy in the morning, I do not know a morning prayer by heart, and so I do not know what to pray." It is not necessary to say long prayers, or special prayers. If there is not much time, say an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," and commend your spiritual and temporal welfare for the day to God. If you have time for more, so much the better. In that case add prayers for those near and dear to you, resolve to avoid sin, and especially your favorite faults. And, of course, the best way to begin the day with God is the attendance at holy Mass. But however little or much time you have be sure to say a morning prayer.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Who Will Enter Heaven?

"And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity; that when you shall fail they may receive you into their everlasting dwellings."—Luke xvi, 9.

Theme.—Not difficult to judge who will enter heaven if we consider what heaven is. Heaven is the reward of:

(1) The suffering and the patient.
(2) The struggling and the conquering.
(3) The loving and the charitable.

Introduction.—In to-day's Gospel, and according to the words in our text, Jesus promises heaven as a reward to those who are charitable. Charitableness can be practised by rich and poor alike. At other times Jesus promised heaven as a reward for other virtues. It is easy to judge who will go to heaven if we consider the nature of heaven and the qualities of its inhabitants.

I. (a) Those will go to heaven who for the love of God have been patiently suffering on earth. Christ in His human body was the first to enter the glories of heaven. He went by way of Golgotha, through suffering and death. The Apostles and martyrs followed in His footsteps, through persecution and martyrdom, and ever since many have trodden the road of suffering for Christ's sake. In heaven they now enjoy their reward.

(b) By Our Lord and His Apostles we are told that "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v, 5, 10). "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke ix, 23). "If we suffer with Him, we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans viii, 17). "Patience is necessary for you; that doing the will of God, you may also receive the promise" (Heb. x, 36). "Let us run with patience to the fight proposed to us" (Heb. xii, 1).

(c) Hence our weal or wo. Happy you that for the love of God patiently endure sickness, privation and persecution! Wo to you who in your adversity murmur against God, and to you that forsake God and virtue when your comfort or welfare is threatened.

II. (a) They only are admitted to a community or society who are willing to conform to its laws, and the admittance to heaven is conditioned in the same way. The blessed in heaven attained their glory by effort, and we, to be admitted to their company, must follow their example.

(b) Original sin subjects us to evil inclinations, desires and impulses which must be conquered. We live in a world of allurements and temptations; these must be avoided or overcome. The evil spirit with his evil suggestions is permitted to put us to a test; we must prove ourselves worthy by standing the test.

(c) Heaven is a reward. It must be merited. St. Thomas à Kempis: "Fight like a valiant soldier, and when out of weakness you sometimes fall, arise and gather courage, and you will receive grace from God to fight the fight."

III. (a) Jesus impressed upon us the lesson that the love of our neighbor and charitableness lead to heaven. "I was hungry and you fed me," etc.

(b) Heaven is the abode of love. Our Father reigns in heaven, and He is all love. There Our Lord dwells and He is love. There the Holy Ghost abides, who is the spirit of love.

(c) The saints and the blessed could not be in heaven had they not loved. A heart filled with hatred, revenge, envy and unkindness, can not enter the kingdom of heaven.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Attendance at Holy Mass

"My house is the house of prayer."—Luke xix, 46.

Theme.—We must attend Mass on Sundays and Holidays of obligation because:

(1) Our Lord demands it.
(2) The Church commands it.
(3) It is a necessity for heart and soul.

Introduction.—Our Lord called the house of God, the Temple in Jerusalem, a house of prayer. It was the duty of the Israelites to pray at certain times in this Temple. The Temple was also

the place where the chief sacrifices were offered. Christian churches take the place of the Temple in Jerusalem. The church is a place for prayer and of sacrifice. In Christianity we have only one Holy Sacrifice—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. While this Holy Sacrifice is daily offered, and may be daily attended, the attendance on Sundays and Holidays of obligation is made a duty for us.

I. Our Lord demands it.

(a) We can, of course, pray to God anywhere, and we know that Christ often prayed in various places. Yet He often went to Jerusalem to the Temple to take part in the prayers and sacrifices. Thus His example teaches us the necessity and importance of praying in church and in common with others.

(b) Jesus expelled the traders from the Temple, so that the pious might without hindrance pray and take part in the sacrifices. This shows again how important the services at church are considered by the Lord.

(c) The Lord, finally, instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. "This is my body," etc. "This is my blood," etc. "Do this for a commemoration of me." The Apostles and their followers were to offer the sacrifice of the New Testament, and the faithful were to attend.

(d) The Apostles often came together, generally on the first day of the week, on Sunday, to "break bread." Their example was followed by the bishops, priests and lay people of the first centuries. A commandment was not then necessary. Their own pious zeal dictated this practise to the early Christians.

II. When after persecution the Church became free and many accepted the faith who were not very zealous in pious practises, the commandment was made necessary. What was formerly understood as a matter of course was now made a law of the Church.

(a) In this way, in fact, all other commands of the Church originated; for instance, the fast before Holy Communion, the obligation of receiving the Sacraments at least once a year, etc. These commandments came into existence as soon as they became necessary, and in making them the Church availed herself of the power given her by Christ. "He who will not hear the Church," etc. "Whatsoever you shall bind," etc.

(b) We must, therefore, under pain of sin, attend Mass on Sundays and Holidays of obligation, unless for grave reasons we are

unable to do so; for instance, in sickness, or when life, health, home or harvest are in great danger.

(c) We must attend Mass with devotion. It is not only sufficient to be there bodily, we must be there in spirit also. It is a sacrifice of propitiation. Therefore, we must remember our sins and pray to be delivered from them by the merits of the bitter passion and death of Jesus. Or we may offer the sacrifice in adoration, thanksgiving or supplication.

III. To attend Mass on Sundays and Holidays of obligation is a necessity for the heart and soul.

(a) The heart desires association with those of the same mind. A Christian heart desires association with other Christian hearts, in order to practise faith, hope and love; in order to edify and be edified. The best opportunity for this is at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

(b) Children delight to gather around their mother to pray with her. The Church is our mother, and at the divine services on Sunday she teaches, advises and prays. Let us heed her and pray with her. Other times we can and should pray at home. On Sundays and Holidays of obligation we should, as dutiful children, unite our prayers with those of our holy mother, the Church.

(c) Our appearance at divine services is a profession of our faith. To profess our faith publicly at least once a week is a necessity for the heart.

(d) Otherwise we become too much wrapped up in our occupations and become worldly. There is great danger for the soul. St. Ferdinand was minister at the royal court of Spain, yet, with all his exacting duties, he attended Mass daily. When it was suggested that he might better apply his time, he replied, "What better could I seek than supernatural strength and grace."

Conclusion.—Much is said of religious sentiment in our age. The best gage is the attendance of Sunday services. When there is a lack of this, the complaint of Christ in to-day's Gospel would surely apply.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Influence of Pride

"The Pharisee prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men."—Luke xviii, 11.

Theme.—The evil influence of pride.

(1) It prevents true Christian self-love.

(2) It interferes with a proper love of our neighbor.

(3) It opposes the love of God.

Introduction.—The Pharisee was regarded by the people as a virtuous man, the publican as a sinner. But the publican escaped condemnation because he was humble; he accused himself of his sins and begged forgiveness. The Pharisee, on the contrary, was not pardoned, because with arrogant pride he proclaimed himself perfect and despised others. Pride destroys all merit, its evil influence prevents the accomplishment of all good deeds.

I. True Christian self-love strives for discernment, for virtue and for spiritual welfare. Pride frustrates these efforts.

(a) Pride does not desire wisdom. It believes itself in possession of the highest degree of wisdom. It would not even willingly take advice from God, much less from man. If the proud were desirous of learning and of acquiring true wisdom they would acknowledge their imperfect knowledge, but this of course is not consistent with pride.

(b) The proud man does not desire to become more virtuous. He thinks he has no faults. He deems himself perfect and therefore makes no effort for progress. He thinks he can by his own efforts achieve all and therefore does not implore divine grace, without which we can not do good.

(c) He does not care for true happiness. We can become truly happy only through virtue, and he has no use for virtue, and the appearance of virtue is all he aims at. The proud person makes himself unhappy in many ways. He chafes at the lack of appreciation shown him. He is sensitive and easily offended, if the respect which he imagines due him is disregarded.

II. The proud person does not love his neighbor.

(a) He is not obedient to his superiors. He can not bear to have anyone set over him, he will not recognize in anyone a representative of God. He understands everything best and scorns guidance and control.

(b) He does not conceal the faults of others. He wants to appear better than everyone else, therefore he endeavors to place all others in the shade and delights in belittling them and in dwelling upon their shortcomings.

(c) He does not acknowledge the merits of others. The good in others irritates him, he desires all merit himself.

(d) He can not be pleasant. To meet everyone amiably requires modesty; it requires our seeing in the neighbor our equal or our better. The proud person will be affable to those only that can further his ambitions. To all others he would rather be impudent.

(e) He cannot be charitable. Lowly persons are not considered by him to be his brothers in Christ. He is so much above them. When he does give alms he does so to gain the prominence that flatters his pride.

(f) He can not forgive. He is always in the right, his opponent always in the wrong. He will not forget an offense. Even though he is in the wrong his pride will not let him acknowledge it.

III. The love of God demands adoration, longing for God, and thanksgiving. The proud person shuns these.

(a) He cares not for the adoration due to God. He adores only himself.

(b) He has no longing for God. He cannot humble himself to that degree.

(c) He knows no gratitude. What he is and what he possesses is all due to his own efforts. He does not consider that he owes gratitude to God or anyone else.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Sanctification of Our Senses

"And they bring to him one deaf and dumb, and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him."—Mark vii, 32.

Theme.—The sanctification of

(1) Sight.
(2) Hearing.
(3) Speech.

Introduction.—If God permits many individuals among mankind to become blind, deaf or dumb, one of His purposes may be to remind us what great gifts sight, hearing and speech are. It should admonish us to make good use of the three most noble senses of the human body, to consecrate them to the service of virtue and of God, to strive for the sanctification of sight, hearing and speech, and this may be done in the following way:

I. We sanctify our sight:

(a) By closing our eyes to that which would corrupt our soul. "I have made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin" (Job xxxi, 1). "He that shutteth his eyes that he may hear no evil, shall dwell on high" (Isaias xxxiii, 15, 16). St. Ambrose: "To look is not sinful, but beware that it may be no occasion for sin."

(b) By conceiving a hatred for the sight of evil. By realizing the hideousness of sin and its consequences.

(c) By using the sight as an aid to devotion. Behold the glorious creation, wonderful providence of God expressed in the whole universe. The sight of the resplendent sun, of the beautiful flowers should awaken in us thoughts of gratitude to God. The sight of sacred articles and edifices should induce us to pray.

(d) Let the eye see with love of innocence. "The light of the eyes rejoiceth the soul" (Prov. xv, 30). "The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity" (Gal. v, 22). If love and innocence dwell in your heart, your eyes will express both.

II. We sanctify our hearing when we

(a) Close our ears to untruth. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xii, 22). Listen to nothing that may weaken your faith in Christian truths, that may injure love of the neighbor, etc.

(b) Close them to seductive language. Flattering and passionate words may sound well to the ears, but the heart is thereby defiled.

(c) Incline them to truth. We should desire to hear, above all other things, words of faith, hope and love. We should, with joy, lend our ear to religious instruction, to the word of God, to the wisdom of the Church, to the guidance of our elders and superiors.

III. We sanctify our tongue and our speech when we

(a) In speaking, show self-control. He who in sorrow and adversity never utters angry words or curses; he who amongst calumniators does not calumniate; he who always speaks the truth and does not lie to gain an advantage, is strong and gives evidence of self-control. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (James iii, 2). "Make doors and bars to thy mouth; melt down thy gold and silver and make a balance for thy words and a just bridle for thy mouth" (Ecclus. xxviii, 28, 29).

(b) Use our speech to benefit others and to influence others to do good. "Speak ye the truth every man with his neighbor; for we are members one of another" (Ephes. iv, 25). "With a good word man shall be made glad" (Prov. xii, 25). "Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth, but that which is good to the edification of faith, that it may administer grace to the hearer" (Ephes. iv, 29). Let us, therefore, speak the truth and be friendly, etc. Let us warn, advise, comfort.

(c) Proclaim the glories of God and praise and thank Him. We owe God so much. He sent His Son to redeem us. Should we not praise Him? Would it be right to keep our gratefulness hidden in our heart?

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Distinction in the Treatment of Our Neighbor

"Who is my neighbor?"—Luke x, 29.

Theme.—Christian charity allows of distinction. Our demeanor may be different

(1) Toward friend and enemy.
(2) Toward righteous and sinner.
(3) Toward relatives and strangers.

Introduction.—In to-day's Gospel we are told that everyone who needs our assistance is our neighbor and entitled to our help. We may not exclude anyone from our love; not an enemy, nor a sinner, nor a stranger. Those most in need have the greatest claim upon us. Our love, nevertheless, may differ toward different people.

I. It is not demanded that we should meet our enemies on the same footing as we meet friends. Our love may show a difference.

(a) Let it be understood that we must love our enemies in the same degree as we love our friends, and even more. We must pray for them, wish them all good, keep them from danger, help them in need, etc. We must forgive and forget. The teaching of Jesus. The example of the good Samaritan. The providence of our heavenly Father.

(b) *Example.*—Your enemy is suffering from deprivation; he is calumniated; he is sick and depends on our assistance. Our duty is plain.

(c) We need not associate with enemies as with friends. Friendship is not demanded by the Christian law. This is a sentiment that is produced by qualities and conditions to our particular liking. Our heavenly Father chose favorites from the people. Christ selected friends. That He selected few for His particular friendship contains a lesson.

(d) We may avoid one that causes us grief. Close your door to a calumniator and a seducer. Shun a false person. Avoid the intemperate man. Flee the company of those that would render you open to suspicion of wrongdoing.

II. We must hate the sin; the sinner, however, we must love. This distinction is a mark of true religion.

(a) Prayer, sympathy, advice and admonition for the sinner are

among our duties. Christ came *because* of sin and the sinner. Great was His love for the sinner. While we must sternly refuse to share in sin, we must not permit ourselves to judge the sinner.

(b) In our social life we may treat the sinner in a manner different from the righteous. We need not meet them with any great friendliness for good reasons, such as

(aa) Proper regard for ourselves, for our honor and reputation.

(bb) Regard for the sinner. Our disapproving demeanor may be the means of making him realize his evil ways.

(cc) For sake of principle. Admission to the circle of our intimate friends should be considered a guarantee of good character.

III. (a) Let all men be our neighbors. We may not forsake anyone in time of necessity. He is not a true Christian who does not help a stranger, or even an enemy, if occasion demands it.

(b) But our first care must be for those nearest and dearest to us. We must be especially considerate

(aa) Of fellow citizens. Those of the same community are often required to assist each other.

(bb) Of our unfortunate relatives, friends, neighbors and those that have been kind to us. They have a right to expect it.

(cc) Of sisters and brothers. We are nearest to them and they are entitled to our help when in need of it.

(dd) Of indigent parents. When they need assistance do not let others undertake their care if you are able to do it. It is your duty. They did not entrust your care to others.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Commandments of the Church

"Go show yourselves to the priests."—Luke xvii, 14.

Theme.—Of obedience to the precepts of the Church:

(1) Why should we submit ourselves to them?

(2) How we should do this.

Introduction.—In addition to the commandments received from God Moses gave to his people still other precepts, for instance, those of fasting, tithes, sacrifices and ablutions. The Jewish prophets

and Levites confirmed and further extended these precepts. Our Saviour submitted Himself to them. "Go show yourselves to the priests." The Catholic Church, which preserved faithfully the Ten Commandments, has also added precepts; for instance, those of fasting, attending Mass, etc. We are bound to keep these precepts.

I. We must obey the precepts of the Church as well as the Ten Commandments.

(a) Because Christ desires it. Christ complied strictly with the Levitical ordinances of the Jewish people, even though he sometimes differed from the Pharisees in their interpretation. He ordained: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen and the publican." He empowered His Apostles, saying: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." The precepts of the Church are in fact only logical conclusions from the teaching of Christ. Christ commanded, for instance, that we must partake of the Holy Eucharist; the Church further defines this law by prescribing the reception of the Sacraments at least once a year, etc.

(b) Because the obedience to these precepts is necessary for our sanctification. Fasting, attendance at Mass, and the Reception of the Sacraments implant and increase in us, faith, love and hope, and the faithful observance of the Church laws will make us good and virtuous Christians.

II. The Church is our mother, and we must obey her as dutiful children. Our obedience must be—

(a) Prompt and conscientious. St. Augustine says: "Without the least hesitation let us subject ourselves to the commandments established by the great authority of the Church." He who does not obey the Church's commandments conscientiously and readily seeks his salvation in the wrong direction. He deems himself wiser than the holy bishops of the early Church. "You know what precepts I have given to you by the Lord Jesus. He that despiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God, who also hath given his holy spirit in us" (I Thess. iv, 10).

(b) In spirit rather than in letter. An obedience according to the letter only would be imitating the Pharisees'. When a commandment of God would seem to interfere with a precept of the Church, fulfil the commandment of God first; if, for instance, on your way to Mass on Sunday you come across a man who has

met with an accident and who needs your help, the Lord's command of Christian charity obliges you to help this man, although you may be late for Mass as a consequence. So is a very sick person not held by the precept of the Church to fast before receiving Holy Communion.

(c) In letter rather than in spirit would he observe the commandments of the Church, who is regular in his attendance of Holy Mass on Sundays, but who hears Mass with wilful distraction, who employs his time while at church in satisfying his curiosity, in talking and jesting with others, or even in more scandalous behavior. The law of fasting would be observed in letter rather than in spirit by one who, though observing the fast days in Lent, would, for instance, be intemperate in drink.

We must, therefore, unite with Holy Mother, the Church, in entering into the spirit of her commandments and observe them for the honor of God and for the sanctification of souls.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A Cheerful Disposition

"Be not solicitous for your life."—Matt. vi, 25.

Theme.—The value of a cheerful disposition; how it should be practised in reference—

(1) To the past.
(2) To the present.
(3) To the future.

Introduction.—Our Saviour, who certainly did not wish us to be careless or frivolous, who so intently desires that we strive with all our energy for the kingdom of heaven, bids us in to-day's Gospel to look into the future with a joyful spirit and cheerful disposition. He wants us to trust in God, to leave our fate to Him, and care for our soul. He demands from us a cheerful spirit of confidence in God, a joyful disposition. This disposition can be applied not only to things to come but to those of the past and present.

I. Some people embitter their lives with the thoughts of past injuries. They can not forget and let bygones be bygones. For instance:

(a) We have been offended and insulted. Some can not forget this, they are always meditating on the wrongs done them, and hence can not bear the sight of their offenders. What a torment this is! He who has a cheerful disposition, on the contrary, forgets the insult, and forgives it, according to the will of our Saviour. And once forgiven it will soon be forgotten. The insult is blotted out, the burden is taken away!

(b) We have suffered serious loss. The melancholy person broods over it, though in this way he can not regain what he has lost. He who has a cheerful spirit remembers that this life is bound to bring losses and disappointments and death. He offers to God the loss of money, of a dear relative, etc., and accepts in cheerful obedience God's dispositions.

(c) Happiness forfeited by sin. There are others who can not reconcile themselves to suffering brought on by their own fault and by a sinful life. Spendthrifts, for instance, who are reduced to poverty by their reckless living. Such people should turn their thoughts to God, accept their misfortune as a just punishment, and recognize in their condition an opportunity to do penance for their sins. In this spirit they will easily be able to bear their burden with a cheerful heart.

(d) Some men fail in their undertakings in spite of their careful efforts. They are discouraged and disheartened. This is indeed a great misfortune, but it is not improved by any amount of brooding and discontent. Only one thing avails, and that is confidence in God. Accept the inevitable. Try to forget: try again. God will help.

II. There are many always dissatisfied, always complaining, often without reason. When their real cares and sufferings come, they break down. Those of a cheerful disposition do not make idle cares for themselves, and real trials they bear with confidence in God; this lightens their burdens.

They console themselves by saying: "Our Saviour who was innocent suffered far more than I who am a sinner." This life on earth is a life of suffering.

(a) Many melancholic persons, who like to look at the dark side of things, always complain about hard times, about the degeneration

of mankind, and they are fond of praising the past. I would advise them: "Read the history and you will find that formerly the times were no better and perhaps worse." We are apt to retain the pleasant impressions of days gone by, and to forget the evils attending them.

(b) The work is hard; the weather is adverse; things do not come our way. Does the dissatisfied person make conditions any better by complaining and growling? He who has a cheerful disposition reassures himself that better times are coming; sunshine follows rain; what can not be done to-day may be accomplished to-morrow. God's holy Will be done, God will help.

III. The Lord desired to deliver us from the cares of the future. "Consider the bird of the air," etc. "Give us this day," etc. "Thy will be done," etc.

We must provide, but not with undue concern. Our Lord wants us to use reasonable efforts in safeguarding our existence. He warns us of the dangers to our souls caused by neglect of spiritual things in the undue care for the temporal.

Conclusion.—"A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by grief of mind the spirit is cast down" (Prov. xv, 13). "A joyful mind maketh age flourishing: a sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones" (Prov. xvii, 22).

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Motherly Love

"When he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother."—Luke vii, 12.

Theme.—The sublimity of motherly love found

(1) In its devotion and unselfishness.

(2) In its intensity and vigor.

(3) In its perseverance.

Introduction.—Of the persons that surrounded the bier of the young man of Naim the one that claims our attention next to our divine Saviour is the youth's mother. In her we see the distressed and sorrowing, and again the rejoicing mother. Taking her for our example let us contemplate the sublimity of mother's love.

I. Abundant is the love of a mother for her child. In tender love she watches over his every step, provides for his every want, would sacrifice her own life to save his. The mother of the son of Naim was certainly no exception. Her love was devoted and unselfish, as that of other mothers.

(a) A mother delights in the beauty of her child, in his sweet smile, in his resemblance to his father, or to herself. But she loves the child no less if he is not pretty, if he is sickly or deformed. Such an unfortunate child receives if possible even more love from his mother. Her love is not conditioned by beauty; or pleasing appearance; it is pure. She is ready to make great sacrifices for her love.

(b) A mother's love works in secret, without regard for praise, reward or gain. She gives without expecting anything in return. How much gratitude does not such love deserve!

(c) The true love of a mother is a spiritual love. The mother knows that the child is a gift from heaven. When she watches she knows that God watches with her. By prayer she leads the guardian angel to the bed of her child. If the child does wrong she threatens him with the displeasure of almighty God. She teaches the child early to fold his hands and to pray. A mother's love is pure, it is not earthly but heavenly. Oh, the pity for both if a mother is not religious! Our deep-seated religious sentiments are a gift from our pious mothers. If a youth or a maiden for the love of God takes up the religious state the resolution has been inspired by a pious mother's love.

II. A mother's love never loses courage; she will venture anything for the sake of her child. This shows the intensity and vigor of motherly love and it is also in this that its sublimity consists. This intensity and vigor manifested.

(a) In poverty and affliction. A child is not starved or frozen unless the mother starves or freezes herself. It is a little short of wonderful how some poor mothers manage to clothe and support their children. The mother's love knows no limitation, is this the fact also of the gratitude of children?

(b) In sickness and suffering. The mother is the best nurse, and often the best physician for her children. To her the child hastens when in pain. When everyone else deserts the sick chamber the mother stays. A good daughter does much for her sick parents, and a dutiful wife much for her husband; but a mother's care for her

child can not be equaled. The poor widow of Naim, like a true mother, had clung to the bedside of her sick and dying son. Mary, so modest and retiring at other times, courageously and steadfastly braved a hostile multitude to be with her Son to the bitter end.

(c) When straying from the path of virtue. Sometimes sons and daughters are led into dangerous paths. The father by warning and punishing may often cause the erring to repent. But a mother has much more influence, she will often be successful where the father's efforts are futile. She detects with a sharp eye the beginning of harm. She reaches the heart of the son or daughter, when appeals to reason are of no avail. Example: The remarkable conversion of Augustine by his mother St. Monica. The health of the body, the virtue of the soul, both are due in a great measure to a mother's love.

III. No less beautiful qualities of mother love are its perseverance and loyalty.

(a) She prays for the child while alive. But she prays not only, she teaches to pray. When the child rises, retires, goes to church, the good and pious mother reminds him of his duty to pray. Who, my friend, has taught you to pray, who has made the sign of the Cross over you? Your mother, surely! If the son or daughter leave the parental house, the mother calls to them: "Have God in mind and pray." And this admonition is not easily forgotten. If only the mother is pious a household will be religious even if the father be irreligious. It is said a household, even if the father turns out bad, is not broken up if the mother faithfully fulfils her duties. The children of a good, pious mother are seldom lost. Therefore, mothers, pray for your children!

(b) She prays in the hour of death. When the mother dies she gives with a dying voice a last blessing to the children she leaves. She gives last admonitions which remain in the children's memory and often preserve them from sin. And when the mother is received into heaven—and there is a place reserved for every good and virtuous mother, she implores God to bestow grace and blessing upon her children.

(c) She prays after death. If a child dies before the mother, she prays so much more fervently for the poor soul of the child, and as Jesus heard the prayerful sigh of the sad mother at Naim, and saved her son, so will God hear the prayer of a mother for her

departed children. The love of a mother, therefore, knows no limitation, it lasts beyond the grave, beyond death!

Conclusion.—Mothers, do not neglect prayer in your home; bring up your children in the fear of God, so that they may be joined to you in the eternal home. And you, children, be grateful to your mother for her pure, strong, and blissful love, and repay her for her years of anxiety for you with filial obedience and affection.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Keep Holy the Sabbath

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?"—Luke xiv, 3.

Theme.—Is there any work that a Christian may perform on the Sabbath day, and what is it? To answer this question let us consider the purposes of the Sabbath. The Sabbath, or Sunday, is the appointed day, on which we are required

(1) To serve God and pray to Him in a special manner.
(2) To elevate ourselves from the temporal to the spiritual.
(3) To rest from work.

Introduction.—It would be demanding the impossible to forbid all manual occupations on Sundays. Such a commandment could not be enforced. There must be, therefore, certain principles governing the distinction between work that is forbidden and work that is allowed on Sundays. And these principles are determined by the necessity of labor and by the spirit in which it is performed. Above all the purposes of the Sabbath, which we shall now contemplate, must not be forgotten.

I. On Sundays and holidays of obligation we must especially serve God, and attend services in church.

(a) We must, therefore, not do anything that would keep us from the services in church, or that would disturb them.

(b) Necessity excuses from commandments. We may prepare food, also medicines for the sick; in a case of fire we may help to

extinguish the flames; if a storm comes up, threatening destruction, the farmer may work to secure the harvest, etc.

II. Excluding necessity we must on Sundays not work for temporal gain. The day should be devoted chiefly to the care of our eternal salvation. Cornelius: "Hear ye, Christians! Seek not your gain in the violation of Sunday and holidays of obligation by working. If God in the Old Testament promised those who kept the Sabbath year food for three years, He will provide as well for Christians who on Sundays refrain from work."

(a) Where work is absolutely necessary and can not be postponed we may work even for gain. So the physician is allowed to practise his profession on Sundays. So, for instance, the labors of railroad employees, of pilots, of servants, of policemen, firemen and others, are necessary and, therefore, allowed, but they will not excuse from attending Mass when it can be heard with some sacrifice.

III. We should rest. Rest, you, that work throughout the week! Our rest can not be absolute, some home labors are even to be done on Sundays. Household duties must be performed, meals prepared. All that is allowed. So are permissible also the study of books, writing of all kinds, the playing of musical instruments. The principle is that only servile works are forbidden on Sundays and holidays of obligation, meaning manual labor performed for gain, and we have seen that for reasonable cause exceptions can be made. Permissible are also harmless games indulged in for recreation, and not interfering with the peace of the Sabbath. Boisterous amusements, dances, excesses in drink, gambling for money, and all entertainments that endanger good morals and religion are forbidden. "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day."

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Rosary

"I took root in an honorable people, and in the portion of my God his inheritance, and my abode is in the full assembly of the saints."—Ecclus. xxiv, 16.

Theme.—The saying of the rosary most worthy and beneficial:

(1) Because best suited for persevering and common prayer.

(2) Because duly honoring the blessed Virgin and urging her intercession.

(3) Because it contains the story of our redemption in a brief form.

Introduction.—The use of the rosary meets with criticism and opposition. The critics are not found among educated Catholics, for they have always defended, and learned men have adopted, this devotion by preference. Nor among the plain people—they would not part with this form of prayer. The critics are the ignorant and indifferent. The devotion of the rosary is to be commended to all.

I. (a) Few Christians have the training and skill to form words of prayer from the effusion of their own hearts, and without prayer-books, without set forms of prayers, our prayers would probably become less frequent and less correct. We need, therefore, such set forms of prayer.

(b) The rosary is a most simple prayer. Even children may learn it.

(c) We have no other form so well suited to alternate common prayer.

(d) This prayer is fit for everybody and every case; it is a real Catholic prayer. The beads are the mark of a Catholic Christian.

II. (a) Fifty times we recite in the rosary "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." This salutation came to us from heaven, and now ascends to heaven.

(b) We say: "Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." This is suitable. We honor Mary because of her Son. All honor of the saints we must attribute to God.

(c) We say: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." Whose prayer can be more efficacious than that of the Mother of God?

III. (a) The joyful mysteries remind us of the coming and the incarnation of Jesus. We remember with joy that God sent His Son for the redemption of mankind.

(b) The sorrowful mysteries place before us the great sufferings of Jesus. They remind us of the tremendous cost at which our redemption was accomplished and warn us to take care lest for lack of our co-operation we may forfeit the fruits of the redemption.

(c) In the glorious mysteries we are reminded of all things to come. Christ arose from the dead, so shall we arise from the dead. He ascended into heaven, so shall we ascend if our life has rendered us similar to Christ. The recital of the rosary in its indefatigable and persevering insistence may be likened to a determined and compelling assault upon heaven. That the rosary is a prayer pleasing to God has been demonstrated in many miraculous instances.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Can Inclination to Sin Be Overcome?

"Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."—Matt. ix, 2.

Theme.—We hear it sometimes said that man can not conquer his inclinations to sin. This is not true, because:

(1) Man is frequently the cause of his own sinful desires.
(2) The sinful man is well aware that the will is lacking, rather than the ability, to overcome the inclination to evil.
(3) The saints were human and had human inclinations and they conquered.
(4) To say this would be to deny the holiness, justice and goodness of God.

Introduction.—Jesus cured one sick of the palsy, who had contracted this sickness through his sins. The scribes were scandalized that the Lord forgave the man's sins, and claimed He had not the power to do this. They said that man must sin and could not do

otherwise, for he could not conquer his inclination to commit sin, and we often hear the same thing said. "I can not do otherwise," is a well-worn excuse. Let us consider this excuse and prove how untruthful it is.

I. It is true that the inclination to sin remains after Baptism; but this inclination can be conquered.

(a) Why are you tormented with impure desires? Because you have admitted them, they are your own fault. You should have fought against them in the beginning. "And they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. v, 24).

(b) Why are men intemperate in eating and drinking? They have practised this intemperance until it became a strong habit. "The lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. iv, 7).

(c) Why do anger and impatience get such a hold on some people? They have probably in their youth been obstinate toward their parents, have lorded it over sisters, brothers and companions, and nurtured in themselves an unconquerable temper without an effort to govern it. They may be likened to a man sitting on a runaway horse. He is asked: "Where are you going?" and he answers: "Wherever the horse takes me." So it is with anger. Anger is the mad horse which people mount. They lose all control over their temper, and it throws them into misery, here and hereafter.

II. The sinful man realizes that his will is lacking, rather than the ability, to overcome his evil hankerings.

(a) Otherwise, how can remorse and qualms of conscience take hold of people who claim they can not do differently, who say they must swear, drink, and do other sinful things?

(b) Why do they accuse themselves of these vices? They know that it is their fault if they have not overcome these sinful habits.

(c) Why the fear of the hereafter? To do things which we must absolutely do, with no possibility to do otherwise, is not sinful, and no punishment is to be feared. Why, then, do such people fear the judgment, if they are so positive that they must do these things?

III. We are likely to think that the saints were a better sort of men from the very beginning of their lives. This is not so, they were human just as we are. Their surroundings were not different. The grace of God alone did not conquer their inclination to sin; they battled themselves.

They proceeded:

(a) Just like those desirous to become skilled in a trade or art. Such people seek skilled masters; so did the saints. They looked up to distinguished models. From a study of their own faults they learned to avoid them.

(b) Just like those who desire to become wealthy. To such there are no trifles; so it was with the saints. No pains are spared; no chances overlooked.

(c) Just like those who strive for honor and regard. They are amiable with their neighbors; so the saints, though not with a selfish motive. They seek to outdo their rivals; so the saints, though not in unworthy emulation.

IV. Such an excuse contradicts:

(a) The divine justice. We are punished, sometimes in this world and surely in the hereafter, if we do evil and omit good. Would this be just if we could not but commit evil? What would we say of a judge who would punish us for things that he himself has made us do?

(b) The goodness of God. A man possessed by the passions of anger, hatred, jealousy, greed, intemperance, lust, is an unhappy person. Would God, who created man to be the noblest of all His creatures on this earth, have intended his misery? Does not God in His goodness give us sufficient strength if we ask for it, and should He refuse to assist our earnest effort to overcome our evil inclinations?

Conclusion.—Of one very anxious to excuse himself, we say usually: "He who excuses himself accuses himself." His excuse means really: "I do not care to." It is not worthy of an intelligent man to say, "I can not help committing these sins," and one of the best proofs that this excuse is invalid is that he will not let such an excuse prevail for his neighbor, especially if he in any way is injured by his neighbor's act.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Bad Catholics

"And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all they found, both bad and good."—Matt. xxii, 10.

Theme.—Why are there so many unholy members of the holy Church?

Introduction.—At the wedding feast there were both just and unjust, and with the exception of one, the unjust partook with the just of the luxuries of the Lord. In Christianity there are just and unjust. This has caused comment, and it has been asked: "Can this be the true religion, that has so many unrighteous members?" Therefore I will try and answer the question: Why does God permit this condition?

I. The Church must not reject the unjust, she must try and convert them, for it is written: "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just." And after the example of Christ the just should go after the lost sheep:

(a) By word and teaching. He who imparts divine truth to others, who encourages them to do good, who calls them away from evil paths, does greater good than he who does corporal works of mercy. Not every heart is obdurate, and the spirit of God prevails where it will. Christian slaves in Rome have converted their heathen masters. Children may gain beneficial influence over their parents. Will the careless husband ignore the loving and earnest admonitions of his wife?

(b) By deed and example. Teaching helps, but the example is stronger. The example draws. A father will accomplish little with admonitions if his life be contrary to his teachings. A general who places himself at the head of his army in battle will accomplish more than he could by mere words. By a virtuous life we contradict those who claim that it is not possible to be pure, temperate, meek, etc.

(c) By punishment. If nothing else is of avail we must avoid evil persons, and exclude them from our society. This may impress them, and they may realize their evil ways. Some may punish in other ways.

II. "It must needs be that scandal cometh: But nevertheless wo to that man by whom scandal cometh." The evil are of avail to the good. How?

(a) The good are warned through their example not to commit sin. The awful result of a vicious life is seen in disgrace, imprisonment, poverty, sickness, suicide, and this warns the just to remain steadfast in virtue.

(b) They are strengthened in virtue. Needless exposure to danger is to be avoided, but contact with sinful people is sometimes necessary, and the courageous refusal of their insinuations, and the intrepid defense against their vituperation, strengthen the just in his own virtue and gain him supernatural reward.

(c) The noblest virtues are promoted. Such Christian virtues are meekness, mercy, love of enemy, humility, patience, gratefulness in suffering and martyrdom. Unrighteous people give us opportunity to practise these virtues. The reproach of those of other faith that there are bad Catholics may be met with above explanations. Besides, would they not reproach us more severely if we should mercilessly eject evildoers from the Church and take away their opportunity to reform?

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Clock of Life

"Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him."—John iv, 52.

Theme.—The clock of life strikes for us:

(1) Hours of enjoyment.
(2) Hours of suffering.
(3) Hours of temptation.
(4) Hours of work.
(5) Hours of edification.
(6) The hour of death.

Introduction.—The clock of life struck a joyful hour for the father when a son was born to him. A sad hour sounded for him when this son suddenly became ill and it became evident that the sickness was leading to death. Happy again was the hour in which

the father learned that Jesus, the great worker of miracles, was coming; happier yet the hour in which Jesus said: "Go thy way; thy son liveth." It was the seventh hour. So does our life clock strike important hours for us.

I. Hours of happiness strike for all people; often for some, more rarely for others. More depends on the disposition of a person than on all other circumstances, for even the poor, the sick, may have happy hours. In what consist these hours of happiness?

(a) There are pleasures found in the contemplation of nature. The song of the birds, the flowers of the field, the seasons, etc. Happy he who finds pleasures in nature.

(b) There are pleasures of society. We find pleasure in the society of good people. Why do we find it among good people only?

(c) There are the pleasures of the home. Happy intercourse of parents and children, sisters and brothers. Why are home pleasures preferable to social pleasures?

(d) There is pleasure in holy things. The rest on Sunday. Attendance at divine service. The sermon. Singing. The feasts, as Christmas, Easter, Corpus Christi.

II. Often, here more, there less frequently, strikes the hour of suffering. Whence do sufferings come?

(a) From one's own discontentedness and carelessness. He who aims too high, who desires too much, does not always reach what he aims for, and on that account is unhappy. He who has never cared to learn anything can not make progress. He who in his healthy days does not economize must in old age suffer poverty and want. Sometimes there is carelessness in choosing the right vocation, the right partner for life. Persons who suffer the consequences of their own doings must not complain, for they have themselves caused these hours of suffering.

(b) From one's own sins. Poverty, oppression, sickness, suffering, disgrace are often the result of one's own sins. Suffering is always found in the path of sin.

(c) From evil people. If we can not avoid their injury, if we must tolerate their insults, let us act according to Christ's teaching. and bless those who curse us; do good to those who hate us. In this way things will be more tolerable. But if we return insults, there will be no end of the trouble.

(d) From God. God's punishments are just. He may desire to punish us in this world; there are also visitations sent out of love

and mercy for us; He desires to try us, purify us, to give us through suffering opportunity to practise Christian virtues. He who looks at suffering in this light, for him the hours of suffering are not the unhappiest!

III. Hours of temptation strike very often. One is tempted to jealousy, hatred and anger; another to theft, or sensuality. Men are troubled with different temptations in youth, in manhood, in old age.

(a) The devil suggests: "This is not sin." "Who would be so foolish and not help himself." "Others do the same." "Sowing wild oats." If the heart believes these lies we perish; if we mind the commands of God and His Church we conquer.

(b) Conscience resists. Everyone who is tempted hears the voice of conscience. There is warning and struggling, at least in the beginning. If cupidity, greed and uncharitableness take possession of reason the conscience is soon silenced. If man, however, does not give way to impious desires the conscience will conquer.

(c) Examples draw, or warn. The example of other offenders who have become miserable through sin warns us. The example of the saints who have conquered similar temptations draws us to victory.

(d) God's promises and warnings help us in the struggle. What did God promise to the conquering, and what to the defeated? The former are promised eternal glory, the latter eternal destruction. He who remembers this will conquer with the grace of God. Alas, so often is short pleasure preferred to eternal salvation.

IV. Regularly the hours of work strike. One must work harder than another. What is the reward of work?

(a) It brings daily bread. "He who will not work shall not eat." "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." Food and drink taste best when earned through work.

(b) Work brings pleasure and energy. If we do not have to work beyond our strength, work is a pleasure, it keeps us healthy and gives us energy. Who is more to be pitied than the idle and indolent person?

(c) It affords us the means of doing good. The lazy can hardly get enough to satisfy their own wants. Many churches and charitable institutions are built and supported mainly by poor but industrious people.

(d) Work merits heaven. He who fulfils the will of God in this

respect is likely to fulfil it in other respects. He who finds pleasure in work generally finds it in doing good. He who through work keeps himself in good spirits wishes good also to others. All this leads to heaven.

V. Frequently, also, strike the hours of edification. The hours for morning and evening prayers, for Mass, for the reception of the Sacraments. These hours should be the best and most profitable. They should be:

(a) Preferred to worldly pleasures. The happiness to have intercourse with God, to hear his priests, must be the greatest pleasure.

(b) Preferred to work. The noblest occupation of man is prayer. It is the work of the soul. This occupation distinguishes man from the animal.

(c) Preferred to rest. In God, if we raise ourselves to Him in prayer, we find consolation, peace, rest. Passions may rage at other times, in the hour of prayer they are silenced.

VI. It is appointed for man to die. The hour of death strikes for each of us. Death comes like a thief at night. To whom is this hour bitter, and to whom sweet?

(a) Bitter to him who partook of the pleasures of this world in a sinful manner; sweet to him who in innocent and lawful pleasures and in doing good found recreation.

(b) Bitter to him who is suffering by reason of his sinful life; who suffered impatiently the trials sent by God; sweet to him who availed himself of visitations sent by God to increase in virtue.

(c) Bitter to him who was conquered by sin, sweet to him who was victorious in temptation.

(d) Bitter to him who only worked from selfish motives; sweet to him who performed his work out of love for God and man.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Conciliatory Spirit

"So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." — Matt. xviii, 35.

Theme.—In order to forgive, to be at all times disposed to reconciliation, we must regard our duty to:

(1) God.

(2) The Offender.

(3) Ourselves.

Introduction.—Our Saviour in to-day's Gospel calls upon us to forgive when we are offended. He commands us to love our enemies, to seek reconciliation.

I. We should try to be like God. "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is," etc. God denies not His love to His offenders and enemies, He forgives; therefore we also must love our enemies, and forgive those who offend us.

(a) Our heavenly Father causes the rain to fall and the sun to shine for good and bad, for His friends and His enemies. All men offend Him more or less through sin, and yet He blesses all. Over and over again He offers us His mercy and pardon. He would have forgiven Cain and Judas had they sought His mercy. He offered up His Son for all mankind, good or bad.

(b) Christ came to His enemies. For them He went to death. Upon the Cross He prayed for His executioners.

(c) But this merciful God cannot forgive us unless we on our part forgive those who offend us. "So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." He is love. Hatred, anger and enmity have no place in this love. In Heaven, and with God, love alone has an abiding place, the love that forgives and forgets. Wrath and hatred the loving God must forever keep far from Himself.

II. The offender may have just cause, as is frequently the case. Possibly he desired merely to draw our attention to a fault, and thus to benefit us. Perhaps He only asked for what was His due.

(b) Perhaps he did not know better, perhaps he did not mean offense. Who is angry with river and rain when they cause havoc? Who can be angry at the child who unmeaningly says something that displeases us? "Overlook the ignorance of thy neighbor." (Ecclus. xxviii, 9.)

(c) Perhaps he did a real injury knowingly and on purpose: he wanted to hurt and offend. Well, there we have an erring man before us. Shall we not have pity upon him? Shall we not aid in saving his soul, and forgive him, so that God may more readily forgive him? Shall we not heap coals of fire upon his head, do good to him to fill his heart with remorse? A merchant who had lived a long time at enmity with his neighbor and fellow tradesman finally wished to be reconciled with him. He suggested to his customers who were in need of things in which his neighbor traded to go to him. The latter was touched, came to ask for forgiveness, and they became the best of friends. And should the other one despite your advances continue to be inimical, then you have a continuous opportunity to practise the most beautiful Christian virtue. St. Ambrose remarks: "If your enemy sees that you bear the first offense calmly and quietly, and that you forgive him even the second willingly, he will not easily attempt a third."

III. Let us glance at ourselves.

(a) None of us wish to be considered weak, small, and cowardly. We would gladly appear great and courageous. To take revenge is small, to bear a grudge is weak, to get angry is cowardly. To forgive and forget is great, and worthy of a noble mind. We ought to be magnanimous enough to shake off all offenses and not be capable of bearing malice. St. Bernard: "Endeavor to learn to forgive and to retain no bitterness in your heart. Whoso accustoms himself to be forgiving, is offended at nothing."

(b) We would be of some account before God, before men, and before ourselves. Well then, let us do something difficult, something worth while. "What great thing are you accomplishing in loving those who love you?" (Matt. v, 46.) Genuine charity goes out towards all and is not influenced by the qualities of our fellowmen. We must love rich and poor, high and lowly, the neglected and the well-favored, the good and the bad.

(c) We want happiness and bliss. To forgive brings great delight to the heart, and forgiveness accords us the surest hope of forgiveness on God's part and of the bliss of heaven.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Worship of God

"Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's."—Matt. xxii, 21.

Theme.—We should serve God in a threefold way:

(1) As individuals, in private devotions.

(2) With the family, in devotions at home.

(3) With the congregation, at public worship.

Introduction.—Our soul is the property of God, consequently we should offer and give it to Him by proper worship. There is a threefold worship of God.

I. Private devotions in their foundation, performance, and importance.

(a) Many individuals worship their own private false God. Pride and popularity are fickle gods. The palate and the flesh are base gods. Mammon is a perishable god. The only worship worthy of the human soul is the worship of the true God, and it is the only worship that can benefit us.

(b) Why private devotion? Is not public Divine Worship sufficient, so that for the rest of the time we may look after our temporal affairs? No, public Divine Worship does not suffice, for St. Paul says that we must pray unceasingly, and Christ and His Saints made one continuous act of Divine Worship of their whole lives. There should not be an hour through all our waking moments in which we do not think of God. We may combine temporal cares with the worship of God. We can best seek honor and a good name by the path of virtue. We can enjoy ourselves and rejoice in the spirit of God. We can labor and accomplish because it is the Divine Will, fortified with the intention to do everything for God.

(c) But we must pray also in the actual sense of the word. Make a good intention at early morning and thus sanctify the whole day's work. In sufferings seek consolation in God, in joys offer up your gratitude to Him who sends them, at night commend your soul to God. Then your work will become pleasant, sufferings are patiently borne, life's pleasures will taste the sweeter.

II. From the obligation of private devotions follows the need of family devotions. He who prays gladly alone, will also pray gladly with his family because he loves his own, wishes them to be united to God, so that all will meet one day in heaven. Common morning prayers, grace at table, evening prayers, saying the rosary together, —such and other common devotions should be practised in every Catholic home.

(b) This was the good old-fashioned custom, but, alas, in many homes it has been left to the individual inclination of the members of a family, whether to serve God or not. The sensational newspaper is taking in too many homes the place of the prayerbook. Scandals are receiving more attention than the service of God.

(c) What is the reason? Unbelief or half belief: nothing is done for religion. We let the household go to church, but God has no place in the home. From pride: we are ashamed to appear devout. Wordly motives: people are no longer solicitous for the spiritual well-being of their family, but only for the temporal.

(d) Where does this lead to? There is less peace and union in the family because the members do not pray together and the religious bond and spiritual affection no longer unite and restrain them. Children do not receive a thorough religious training, they lose their regard for virtue. The Divine blessing vanishes. Work is considered a burden, poverty an injustice.

III. In public Divine Worship we have, first, the part of teaching. The soul needs instruction as the body needs nourishment. We must have answers to any doubts arising, motives for the moral laws, the doctrines of faith must be refreshened: how can we believe if we hear not?

(a) There is the praying. Common prayer in the house of God is inspiring and induces devotion. The chief part of public Divine service is the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. What dignity it has. How we should assist thereat, how pray, meditate, etc.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Thoughts of Death

The Gospel: Jesus raises from the dead the daughter of the ruler of the Synagogue. —Matt. ix. 18–26.

Text: Give place: for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. — Matt. ix, 24.

Theme.— Some considerations on death.

(1) What is the Catholic idea of death?

(2) What do we leave behind in death?

(3) What do we take with us?

Introduction.—The daughter of the ruler was really dead. Her father said so, and her relations derided the Lord when He said she only slept. Jesus was well aware of it. He merely compared death to sleep, the sleep of the body until its resurrection, while the soul was not dead, but had left the body. Jesus reunited both. And so will it be with us. We shall die, there will be a separation of body and soul and later a reunion.

I. (a) For the sinner, death is a terrible fact. In his innermost soul no one denies a hereafter, and the sinner fears retribution. Death comes frequently quite unexpectedly. "Death comes as a thief in the night, when one least expects it." Be vigilant, for if we die in sin the punishment will be terrible. "There will be howling and gnashing of teeth."

(b) For those seeking truth and justice, death is joyful. "Here we see God only in a mirror, but there face to face." Here much is obscure. Death is the emerging from darkness into the bright light of eternal day.

(c) For the sufferer, death is a deliverer. Comparison with sleep after hard labor.

(d) For the virtuous, death is the goal of their desire. Our true home is in the hereafter. Death is a second birth, the returning home. The longing of St. Paul: "I desire to be dissolved." The joy of all the Martyrs in dying. St. Francis of Sales: "Since Christ willed to drain the chalice of suffering and of death, death is replete with sweetness and consolation for the friends of God, and no longer contains bitterness."

(a) Children reproach their parents, according to the words of Jesus, that their own children shall be their judge: "You bear the blame for our ruin, through your partiality and bad example." Servants will accuse their masters for keeping them from going to church. But there will be even more severe reproaches from those whose virtue has been destroyed.

(b) The oppressed. You held back my just wages! You exploited my need and exacted excessive interest! You bore false witness in court! Provoked by injustice we were incensed at you, cursed you and forgave you not, and thus we shall be damned together with you!

(c) Others will complain: We lived in the happiness of innocence. You robbed us of it! Our married lives were happy. You came and destroyed it! We held the true faith. By ridicule and derision you took it away from us! We took pleasure in the Lord's service. You diverted us from it! We fulfilled the duties of our state of life. You caused us to neglect our duties!

(d) The Saints and the just will give occasion for bitter remorse on the part of those who forfeited their opportunities for leading a righteous life.

III. The whole human race has finally assembled for judgment. All are anxiously expectant. The Son of Man appears in glory and majesty. He brings to light all facts, even those that were most secret. He will judge the heart. Many who passed for righteous will not stand the ordeal. What will be brought to light?

Conclusion.—Who are there who have not to fear the judgment of the conscience and the Judgment of God? Those only who do right, who practise virtue and penance.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

INDULGENCES

"Look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption is at hand."—Luke xxi, 28.

Theme.—Indulgences.

(1) History.
(2) Their benefit.
(3) The easy way to gain them.

Introduction.—If we wish to enter at once into a blessed eternity at the end of our earthly lives, we must strive to gain indulgences and thus efface the temporal punishment due to past sin. Having lived a good life, and through penance effaced the eternal punishment, and through Indulgences the temporal anxiety and fear of death will be unnecessary.

I. That sin is followed by both eternal and temporal punishment and that the temporal punishment is not always remitted when the sin is forgiven, we see very plainly in Moses and David. The Church has prescribed penances. After the sin has been forgiven Indulgences are the means at our command to wipe out the temporal punishment due to sin.

(a) In earliest times Indulgences were given in instances of great penitential zeal, of great contrition, and at the intercession of holy martyrs and Saints.

(b) In the middle ages they were bestowed for great services, for participation in crusades, for equipping a pilgrimage, for ransoming prisoners, erecting monasteries, hospitals, the building of churches, etc. The spirit of those times required such offerings, later they were no longer rewarded by Indulgences.

(c) Since the time of the Council of Trent, Indulgences are granted only for prayer and acts of devotion.

II. The Church has the power to grant Indulgences. She has authority even to forgive sins and eternal punishment. She can bind and loose, therefore punish, commute punishments, and remit them. She has charge of the treasury of the Church. Clement VI: "The Redeemer shed all His blood, not merely a drop of it." How great therefore must the treasure of graces be that the militant Church has acquired! We know too that the merits of the Blessed Virgin and of all the elect have contributed to enrich this abundant treasure. The objection that this tends to laxity, impenitence, and lack of virtue is false. Conc. Trid: "Those incur excommunication who say that Indulgences are useless, or that the Church has no power to grant them."

(a) Many go to the Sacraments in order to be able to gain indulgences in the state of grace, and therefore they perform good works for the sake of gaining Indulgences. Thomas Aquinas "He who has not received from God the remission of his guilt, cannot have the punishment of it remitted, through Indulgences.

(b) Others perform certain pious exercises because of Indul-

gences, thus sanctifying their life; they take part in Missions, enter confraternities, etc.

(c) Others again, to apply Indulgences to departed relatives and parents, lead a devout life, so that the gaining of Indulgences exercises a great influence upon the devotion of people.

III. When we reflect that great sins in the early Church incurred a seven years' ecclesiastical penance, disrespect towards parents one of forty days' duration, etc., it is astounding how easily Indulgences may nowadays be gained.

To numberless prayers and devotions are attached Indulgences. Confraternities, pictures, scapular, rosaries, have been endowed with Indulgences, and the many and easy means by which Indulgences may be gained are proof of the earnest desire of Mother Church that the faithful should make use of them.

Exhortation.—Remember that at the hour of your death you will wish to be secure from the tortures of purgatory. Remember the poor souls!

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

The Blessings of Christianity

"The Poor have the Gospel preached to them."—Matt. xi, 5.

Theme.—Jesus uplifted the position of all, but especially:

(1) Of Woman.

(2) Of Children.

(3) Of the Working Classes.

Introduction.—John besought the Lord from His prison to declare Himself as the expected Messiah.

Jesus attracted attention by His Miracles. They were the testimony to His dignity as Christ. In those times the proofs for the truth and divinity of His doctrine were seen in the miraculous healing of the blind, the lame, of lepers and deaf mutes, and in raising of persons from the dead. It is more important for us, however, that Jesus brought to the poor the heavenly message, that for all time the condition of the poor would be uplifted by Him. How wretched was then the condition of woman, of children, of the working classes, and how different it is now?

I. Before Christianity, and outside its pale, it was the custom to regard woman as of lower position than man, existent merely to serve him. The wife was not her husband's partner, but his servant. She had neither rights nor protection. The polygamy of the heathen, and the divorce bill of the Jews, suppressed everything that was noble in woman. How did Christ and Christianity change this condition? (a) Christ was born of a Virgin, and the honor in which this Virgin and Mother is held, uplifted the dignity of virgin and mother. (b) Christianity established the sanctity of Matrimony and abolished polygamy and divorce. (c) Christianity regards those virtues highest which are preeminently the adornment of women, and are generally practised by them, such as unselfishness, patience, purity, etc. (d) The Christian Church honors highly saintly virgins, mothers, and widows.

II. Children were brought up by ignorant and oppressed mothers, they were not protected against ill-treatment. Jesus Himself became a child. He blessed the children and spoke of their Guardian Angel, He required us to be like little children. Now they are sanctified by baptism and are regarded as gifts of Heaven, cherished, protected, and educated for a blessed life in Heaven.

III. The workers before Christianity were slaves, men without rights and protection. Jesus Himself became a worker, died for us all, taught that God was no respecter of persons. Masters that became Christians abolished slavery. Are not laborers and workingmen free now? God created Adam and Eve, both equally free. Neither was there a slave created to wait upon them. Abel, Seth, and Noe had no slaves. In the beginning, therefore, all were born blessed with equal freedom. Sin in its manifold curse brought about man's inability to govern himself and then arose all kinds of servitude. Some may ask: Are not some amongst us poor and others rich; some slaves, others masters? No, we have no slaves, all men are to us as brothers, we call them brothers. Chrysostom: "In the Christian Church there is no slavery. The regenerated are brothers."

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Knowledge of Self

"And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed: I am not the Christ."—John i, 20.

Theme.—The chief obstacles to a correct judgment of ourselves and of others are:

(1) Self-love.
(2) Selfishness.
(3) Indolence.

Introduction.—John judged himself correctly: he was not Christ, not even a Prophet, he was not worthy to loosen the latchet of the Saviour's shoe. He judged correctly also the Jews and the Pharisees. His correct judgment about Jesus was, that He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Our judgment, however, is frequently false.

I. Self-love, conceit, pride, want of Christian humility hinder us frequently from judging correctly.

(a) Some one has some good qualities, and mindful of these qualities he overlooks his lack of others and condones his faults. He sees only the good in himself, not the bad, and judges falsely concerning his own worth. Those faithful to duty are conscious of their fidelity, but overlook their irascibility. The zealous churchgoer may be forgetful of the fact that he is uncharitable.

(b) A person often thinks that his faults are not noticed. He is often harsh towards others who have the same faults. We may even worry about those who have faults such as we have. The proud, for instance, cannot tolerate pride in others. Self-love is blind to our faults, but sees them in others.

(c) In reproving the children of other parents, fathers and mothers are wont to say: We bring our children up properly, we would not stand for any such conduct. People love themselves in their children, and any censure of their children is very distasteful to parents. There, again, people often do not see the faults in their own children, but see them in other children. Self-love clouds their judgment.

(d) When superiors justly reprove us, we are seldom willing to see our mistakes, our superiors are wrong, they have been led astray by gossip or temper.

(e) Those who mismanage their household seek the cause for their failure anywhere but in themselves. Self-love warps their judgment.

Let us put off self-love and we shall arrive at a correct judgment of persons and things. Let us contemplate our own shortcomings and see whether we should not be blamed rather than others.

II. A tradesman may have regard only for his own profit and judge people in this light. The good customer is a highly respectable person for him no matter how bad his morals. The influential office-holder commands the votes of those who receive his favors, even if they well know that he is a danger to the welfare of the people. If a good and honest man fails in business he is unmercifully criticised and harshly rebuked if he comes for aid.

It is rare, and therefore most pleasant, to hear an opinion passed which is not based upon a selfish standpoint.

III. Indolence, the fear of reflection, and inquiry is very often the cause of unjust criticism.

(a) In a conflict between superior and inferior the tendency of man is to regard the weaker party to be right and the superior to be wrong. Persons in authority, employers, are seldom judged rightly. It is easier to form an opinion from the story we hear first.

(b) Those in authority are always in the wrong with the majority of persons. When our equals are concerned we encounter no difficulty in forming an opinion. To defend official dignity and privilege would cost an effort and might meet with opposition, and this we dread from sheer indolence, if for no other reason.

(c) If blamed and censured, we are inclined to be angry, not at ourselves but at those who censure us. This frequently happens because we do not take the trouble to reflect as to whether the censure is justified and well founded.

(d) On account of indolence people are often less successful than their neighbors, and envy and jealousy influence their judgment.

Let us not be indolent: a right opinion is worth some trouble.

Let us remove self-love, selfishness, and indolence, call not evil good, nor good evil. Then shall we be righteous, and the righteous deserve honor and praise here and hereafter.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Prepare the Way of the Lord

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."—Luke iii, 4.

Theme.—Advent is the time in which we should be preparing ourselves for the coming of Jesus. He brings:

(1) Peace.
(2) Consolation.
(3) Joy.

Introduction.—Jesus Christ wishes to come to us, to be born within us. He, the King of Kings, would rule our spirit and our will, would govern our hearts, and to Him we should pay tribute by prayers and good works. John the Baptist exhorts us to prepare the way for the Lord. That we may the more readily do this, let us consider what He is bringing us.

I. Christ brings us peace. The Prophet Isaias announced that in the Kingdom of the Messias there would be peace. Swords and spears turned into ploughshares and sickles (Isaias ii, 4). Before the coming of the Lord there prevailed everywhere much turbulence because Christ had not yet established His Kingdom amongst men. "There is no peace to the wicked" (Is. xlii, 22). "The way of peace they have not known" (Ps. xiii, 3). "Who hath resisted him, and hath peace?" (Job ix, 4). Where the teaching of Christ has penetrated, where the faith in Him and in His love is found, there is peace. "And on earth peace to men of good will" (Luke ii, 14). Peace between nations; peace in Christian lands, in Christian communities, in every Christian family, and, finally, in the Christian heart. Thomas à Kempis: "When you have attained a complete contempt for yourself (have received Christ within you) then know, you will have peace in superabundance."

II. Christ brings consolation. Ecclesiastes thus expresses the desolation of the world before Christ and without Him (iv, 1–3). "Man's days are full of trouble and tribulation is his business. I praise the dead rather than the living, and I judge happier than them both him that is not yet born." It is otherwise in Christianity. What consolation does not Jesus grant us in sorrow and sickness, in poverty, neglect, and persecution, in trouble, in repentance, in death, and, finally, at the graves of our dead?

III. Christ brings joy. Already at John's birth great joy prevailed. But at the birth of Jesus the Angel said: "I announce unto you a great joy." He said this because Jesus gives us joy, the highest and purest joy we can experience. We have become children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus: what a joy! "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God" (Ps. viii, 3). We are taught charity and virtue, and virtue brings surest joys. To do right is a joy to the just. Athanasius: "A pious life is the source of true joys." Thomas à Kempis: "If you have a good conscience, true joys will not be wanting to you."

(c) Through Christ we have truth, and in this we rejoice while we worry in doubt. "Charity rejoiceth in truth" (1 Cor. xiii, 6).

(d) We receive the right spirit of prayer, prayer leads us to God and in being near to God we are happy. We receive through Christ the hope of Heaven, and this makes us joyful. "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Prov. xxi, 15).

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